

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

MACKEREL COBIA ADVISORY PANEL

Webinar

April 21, 2023

Transcript

Mackerel Cobia Members

Ira Laks, Chair

Stephen Donalson, Vice Chair

Anthony Benevento

Keith Bowen

Steve English

Edward Olsen

Rusty Hudson

William Jones

Aaron Kelly

Charles Locke

Thomas Newman

William Palmer

Council Members

Trish Murphey

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Dr. Chip Collier

Observers and Participants

Nikhil Mehta

Other observers and participants attached.

The Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened via webinar on January 18, 2023, and was called to order by Chairman Ira Laks.

MS. WIEGAND: All right, Ira. Well, I've got 1:00 p.m. on the dot, and there are still a couple of people that mentioned to me that they were going to be here that haven't hopped on yet, but we do have, you know, quite a lengthy agenda for just a short webinar meeting, and so, if you're good to go, I think I'm also ready to get started.

MR. LAKS: That sounds good to me. All right, well, we are going to begin the Mackerel Cobia AP meeting, here on the 21st of April, 2023. We need to get an approval of the agenda. Is there anyone in opposition of the agenda? Seeing no hands, and no objection, I think we will move on with the approval of the agenda then.

The next thing would be Approval of the October 2022 Meeting Minutes. Is there anyone who has any adjustments or anything they would like to bring up about the meeting minutes from 2022, in October? Then we have approval of the minutes, with no hands.

MS. WIEGAND: Ira, before we jump into Tom's report, I think it maybe it might help if I give everyone another quick reminder of how to work the webinar, since it's been a while since we've had one of these meetings, if that's okay.

MR. LAKS: Yes, and do we want to do a quick introduction too?

MS. WIEGAND: Yes, I think that would be helpful, and I can certainly go and call names down the list, so that everyone can get a moment to introduce themselves.

MR. LAKS: Okay. I will turn it over to you.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Well, first just a friendly reminder on how you work the webinar. You've got this little microphone button here. If it is orange, you are muted, and, if it's green, your mic is live, and everyone can hear you. I just ask that, when you're not actively speaking on the webinar, that you go ahead and mute yourself, to lower down on background noise.

This little turkey-looking thing is the hand-raise button. That's how you're going to indicate that you would like to add something to the conversation. Myra, behind the scenes, will then add your name to this hand-raise list on the side, so you'll be able to sort of see where you are in the queue. If that little button is red, if it's got a red arrow, that means your hand is raised, and then, finally, if you've got any sort of technical issues, Julia Byrd is also helping out behind the scenes, and you can type a question in here for staff, and then we'll be able to sort of help you troubleshoot whatever the problem may be.

With that, I think I'm going to run us through introductions, real fast. Most of you all know me. I'm Christina Wiegand, and I'm the Fisheries Social Scientist here with the South Atlantic Council, and I am the FMP lead for Mackerel Cobia, and the one that is constantly bombarding you with emails, and so, you just going down my list, let's start with you, Spud, and then Tom.

MR. WOODWARD: Thanks, Christina. Good afternoon, everybody. I'm Spud Woodward, and I'm a council at-large member from Georgia, and I live in Brunswick, and I am currently vice chair of the Mackerel Cobia Committee.

MR. ROLLER: Hi, everybody. My name is Tom Roller, and I'm the at-large North Carolina council member and current chair of the council's Mackerel Committee. I'm a full-time for-hire operator, and I live in Beaufort, North Carolina. Also, I'm a former Mackerel AP member.

MS. WIEGAND: Aaron Kelly, you're next on my list, if you want to introduce yourself.

MR. KELLY: I'm Aaron Kelly, and I run the Charter Boat Rock Solid out of Oregon Inlet Fishing Center, and we also have two other for-hire boats, and I work under my fishing name, and we've been doing it for about twenty-five years.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Charlie Locke, you're next.

MR. LOCKE: I'm Charlie Locke, and I live in Wanchese, North Carolina. I've been full-time commercial fishing for almost thirty years, mainly gillnet, but we do a lot of hook-and-line snapper grouper fishing, and I just do a little bit of everything. Thanks.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Next, I've got our esteemed chair, Ira Laks.

MR. LAKS: My name is Ira Laks, and I've been in the charter and commercial fisheries for over thirty-five years, and I am from Jupiter, Florida.

MS. WIEGAND: Keith Bowen, you're next.

MR. BOWEN: This is Keith Bowen. I'm a commercial king mackerel fisherman from Sebastian, Florida.

MS. WIEGAND: Rusty Hudson.

MR. HUDSON: I'm Rusty Hudson, and I've been running Directed Sustainable Fisheries for many years, and I've been involved in charter, headboat, and commercial fishing since the early 1960s, and I've been real happy to be able to help in a lot of ways. Thank you.

MS. WIEGAND: Steve Donaldson.

MR. DONALSON: Good afternoon, everybody. Steve Donaldson from St. Augustine, Florida, a recreational fisherman, a one-time Pro Kingfish Tour member, with the SKA, and I also, as background, have degrees in marine science biology and marine science business, and I'm on the Mackerel Cobia Panel, and this is I think my third term, or maybe my fourth term, but, anyway, I'm here to help, and I'm looking forward to what we're going to learn today.

MS. WIEGAND: Steve English.

MR. ENGLISH: I'm Steve English, and I'm from Port Salerno, Florida. I've been commercial fishing for over forty years, pushing fifty, and I have fished Florida through North Carolina, and I'm a member of the AP, and I'm trying to work on Spanish mackerel.

MS. WIEGAND: Thomas Newman.

MR. NEWMAN: I'm Thomas Newman, and I commercial fish out of North Carolina, and I also work part-time at the North Carolina Fisheries Association. I've been a commercial fisherman since before I had memories, and I grew up in the family, and that's it.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Tony Benevento.

MR. BENEVENTO: Tony Benevento, Jacksonville, Florida. I grew up in Fort Lauderdale, and I've been fishing since I was nine, and so that puts me at about sixty years of recreational fishing.

MS. WIEGAND: Last, but not least, Will Jones.

MR. JONES: Hi, everybody. I'm Will Jones from Bounty Hunter Guide Service, and I'm a full-time fishing guide from Morehead City, North Carolina. This is my second meeting, and my first meeting was the meeting in October in Charleston, and that was fun, and I appreciate everybody, and I'm looking forward to it.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Then, next, I think we've got Will Palmer, who just hopped on. Will, if you want to try to unmute and do a quick soundcheck and maybe introduce yourself to the group. Will, we just sent you an audio pin, and it looks like you're bouncing back and forth. I think we're going to go ahead and get started, but, if you continue to have audio issues, you can type into that chat box. Maybe we've got you now. Let's see. Will, can you hear us, Will Palmer? It looks like you're muted on your end, Will. If you hit that microphone button, once it turns green, you're unmuted, and we'll be able to hear you. Julia, I might ask you to shoot him a quick message and see if we can get him online, while we get rolling down the agenda.

MS. BYRD: Will do.

MR. PALMER: Can you hear me?

MS. WIEGAND: There we go. Perfect. We can hear you loud and clear. Do you want to just introduce yourself, real fast?

MR. PALMER: My name is Bill Palmer, and my official name is William Palmer, but I live in the Jacksonville, Florida area, and I'm seventy-three years old, or seventy-two years old, excuse me, and I will be seventy-three at the end of the year, and I'm an avid fisherman, and I'm just enjoying being a part of all of this.

MS. WIEGAND: Excellent. Thank you all so much for taking the time to introduce yourselves, and, with that, I will turn it back over to you, Ira, to run us through this agenda.

MR. LAKS: First off, I would like to thank everyone for hopping on here. I appreciate you all taking the time, and I look forward to hearing what you have to say. I think we're going to go now

to a report from Tom Roller, who is the council's Mackerel Cobia Committee chair, and so I'm going to hand it over to you, Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. My report is going to be really brief, because I think we're going to go over a lot of the material today, but, first of all, I just want to thank all the advisors for being here. This is really important, what you do, and sacrificing your time, and I just did receive a text message from one of you, saying you left a really good bite to be here, and so we sincerely appreciate that.

Just as a reminder, you know, king and Spanish mackerel, in particular, are some of the most important recreational and commercial fisheries that the council manages, and, you know, as far as commercial, they're first and third in ex-vessel values, and they're number one and two in landed pounds, and, for recreational, both species are two and three in directed trips, following only dolphin, and so just a reminder of how important this fishery is.

On my report, what I'm going to do is just touch base on what we went through at the last council meeting, and I know that some of you tuned-in and listened to that, and the first thing was we -- The majority of the conversation was about the stock assessment and us expressing our frustration with just the debate between the Science Center and the SSC and them not being able to reconcile the stock assessment, and I know we're going to go into that a little bit more today.

The big part of the discussion though was port meetings, and I know this has been very important to the advisory panel for a long period of time, dating back to when I was an advisory panel member, and we're going to go forward with port meetings across the South Atlantic. The council -- We debated this at-length, and what we're trying to do is encompass the entire region of this fish, including the Gulf of Mexico, and going from Florida all the way to the southern shore of Massachusetts, partnering with the other councils, as well as the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission.

I was the liaison to the Gulf Council meeting, a couple of weeks ago, and I had a lot of conversations, regarding the port meetings, with the Gulf Council members, as well as their staff and other stakeholders there, and there's some really interesting things going on with the fishery, and so I really hope that the Gulf will be part of this discussion as well.

The third piece, and I'm sure some of you all heard this, was that we had a lengthy discussion regarding the sale of recreationally-landed -- It's kind of a hard thing to say, but the sale of tournament landings from recreational tournaments and how they're counted against the commercial quota. We had a really lengthy discussion on that, and I know there was some discussion here, and hopefully it will be brought up here at the meeting today, if we have time, but, realistically, looking forward, we have to kind of see the numbers, and what they look like, as part of the quota, before we can really continue that discussion, and that's all I have for you guys.

MR. LAKS: Thank you, Tom. Christina, I guess I'm going to turn it over to you to get an update on the recently-submitted amendments.

MS. WIEGAND: Thanks, Ira, and so this is going to be a pretty brief update, because we don't have that many amendments going through the process right now for CMP, and so, if you guys will remember Amendment 34, and this was the king mackerel assessment amendment, and it

responded to the SEDAR 38 update, and it found that king mackerel are neither overfished nor undergoing overfishing, and, in fact, due to a number of years of really strong recruitment, the catch levels were able to be raised quite a bit through this amendment, and this is also the amendment that was going to adjust sector allocations, up the recreational bag limit off the east coast of Florida to three fish per person, to match the rest of the Gulf and Atlantic coast, and adjust the requirement to land fish with heads and fins intact, so that recreational fishermen could sort of match with commercial fishermen and be able to land king and Spanish mackerel that had been bitten by sharks, or barracuda, as long as the part of the fish that was left met the minimum size limit.

The council approved that amendment back in March of last year, and it's been submitted. The proposed rule published earlier this year, with comments due at the end of March, and the final rule should be publishing for that any day now.

The only other amendment that was underway at the time was Amendment 33, and this was the Gulf's response to the king mackerel assessment, and, if you guys will remember, at your meeting in October, we talked a little bit about the sector allocation adjustments that they were considering in that amendment. However, ultimately, they decided to stop work on this amendment, and so it won't be moving forward at this time, and so those are the only two mackerel amendments that I've got to update you on.

You do have the full document in your briefing book, and this covers all amendments that are going through the council process right now, and so, in the future, you're looking through it, and you have questions about amendments that are not mackerel-related, feel free to reach out, and I can always put you in contact with whoever is in charge of those amendments, and so that's all. If there are any questions about either of these two amendments, I am happy to answer them.

MR. LAKS: I don't see any questions, and so I believe we're going to move on to Citizen Science, and Julia and Meg are going to give an update of what's going in the citizen science world.

MS. BYRD: Hi, everyone. For those of you who I haven't had an opportunity to meet yet, my name is Julia Byrd, and I work with Meg Withers on our Citizen Science Program, and so, today, I just wanted to kind of update you guys on a few things that have happened since you met last fall and then tell you about two kind of upcoming projects that we have that we're hoping to get some input from you guys on, and so hopefully some assistance from you guys on.

First off, I just wanted to update you guys on a couple of things. We have been working with some of our colleagues at NOAA to put together a special issue of a magazine called *Fisheries*, and it's an issue on citizen science, and so that special issue came out in November, and there's an article in it on our FISHstory project, that I'll be talking about a little bit later, and so, in your briefing book, in the presentation slides, there's a link to that special issue, if you're interested in checking it out, and then I also just wanted to let you all know that, if you want to dig more into what's kind of going on in our citizen science program, we recently did a seminar presentation, through NOAA's central library, and so there's a link to that webinar recording, if you guys are interested in learning more about the projects we have going on and some of the results from those projects that we've gathered so far.

The real things that we wanted to chat with you about today, and get some input from you guys on, are kind of two initiatives that we're hoping to get underway in the upcoming months, and so the first one is related to our FISHstory project, and so I know there are a few, I think, new kind of Mackerel AP members on, and so this is a project where we're using kind of old, historic fishing photos to help us better understand kind of what was being caught, kind of the 1940s, 1950s, 1960s, and early 1970s, and kind of the size of fish that were being caught back then.

Last fall, I was able to give you guys an update on some findings from our pilot project, and so a couple of things have happened since the meeting last fall. One of the things that we're really excited about is that we submitted a grant proposal, and it is successfully going to get some funding to help us move our FISHstory project from kind of a pilot to a full-scale project, and one of the first things that we really need to do, in order to kind of expand the project, is to gather more kind of historic fishing photos from around the South Atlantic region, and we were really lucky to be able to partner with Rusty, who sits at the table with you guys on this initial pilot project, and he provided a ton of photos that we use in our pilot project, and he's actually been wonderful about reaching out to other kind of fishermen in his area, to gather more photos, but, to kind of take this project to the next level, we need to get photos from kind of each of the areas around our region.

The thing that we're trying to do is we're going to host kind of FISHstory scanning events, kind of later on throughout this year, and the goal of these events is we're going to try to kind of encourage people to come to these events to help us gather historic fishing photos from across the region, from kind of the 1940s to 1980s, that we can use in this FISHstory project, and so we're hoping to host these events in collaboration with some of the upcoming council and advisory panel meetings, and of note for you guys is that we're hoping to host one of these scanning events when you guys have your in-person Mackerel meeting, a bit later this summer here in Charleston.

Just to give an overview of what we want to happen at these kind of scanning events is we're going to invite people to bring kind of hard-copy photos, or digital photos, from kind of historic -- From the historic fisheries, or historic dock photos from their areas. If they're hard copies, we're going to scan those in. If they're digital photos, we'll just save those, and we'll collect some information on the photos, things like kind of where the photo was from, do we have a year that the photo was from, and then, if people are bringing hard-copy photos, we want to make sure to also be able to provide them with the digital copies of the photos as well, so that they'll not only have the hard copies, but they will also have digital copies, moving forward.

The kind of photos that we're looking for to analyze in the FISHstory project are really kind of these photos that are taken at the end of a fishing trip, where kind of the harvested catch is kind of displayed, and the anglers who went on that trip are kind of in the photo with that harvested catch. We're really interested in getting a year that the photo was taken, because that will help us use it in the analyses, and having some general information on the photo's location, at least kind of state-level information.

Then we're also hoping to gather information on the photo provider, just contact information for them, really so we can keep them in the loop on what is happening with the FISHstory project and make sure they know how their photos are being used, and so that's kind of the level of information we need, but, even better than that, is if we have photos where the fish are kind of being displayed hanging on a leaderboard. That allows us to get some length estimates of the fish. If we have more specific information on when the photo was taken, and things like month can be really useful,

or more specific location information, if we know the city that the photo was taken in, or the dock that it was taken in, and it's even better if we can get details like the vessel name and the captain's name of these photos.

The next thing that I wanted to do is walk you through a few kind of example photos that are really helpful and useful for the project, and the first one I'm going to show is one that Rusty provided, and this is kind of the gold standard, so to speak, of photos that we can analyze in FISHstory, and so this is kind of displaying kind of the harvested catch at the end of a trip, and we have the anglers who caught it in the photo with the fish. The fish are hanging on a leaderboard, which allows us to get kind of estimated size, and we know the date this photo was taken, the month, the day, and the year, and we know the location and the dock, or inlet, that it was caught off of, as well as kind of the vessel and captain name, and so Rusty provided a ton of these kind of wonderful photos for analysis, and so these are kind of the gold standard.

However, also really useful are kind of some other photos that other fishermen, or museums, have helped us gather thus far, and so this is another awesome photo that's great for the FISHstory analysis, and this one was taken in the Outer Banks, and, again, the fish are displayed on a leaderboard, and we know the year of the photo, and we don't know the month, but that's okay, and it's still a really useful photo. We know kind of where it was taken, where the fish were landed, and so another example of an awesome photo for our FISHstory project.

Just one more, and this one is from a little bit more recent, and this was provided by one of our Snapper Grouper AP members, and he was a long-time fisherman in Atlantic Beach. Again, the fish are hanging on the leaderboard, allowing us to get lengths, and we can have information on the year, the city, the dock, the state, and kind of the vessel information and captain information as well.

Other photos that can be really useful to our project are photos where kind of the fish are displayed, and they're not necessarily hanging on a leaderboard, but they're displayed on a dock, and kind of laid out, and this is a great example of a photo that was provided by Judy Helmey, who is a council member and captain out of Savannah, Georgia. The fish aren't hanging on a leaderboard, and so we can't -- It's harder for us to get length of fish from these photos, but you can see what was caught and get catch composition and catch rates.

Then just a few more example photos, and this is another one, which is a great one, from the Outer Banks region. Again, things aren't hanging on a leaderboard, and so it's harder to get size, but we're able to see kind of all of the fish in the photo, and most of them are shown enough where we're able to get an identification. Then the last example that I wanted to show you is another one that Judy provided, and I think there are a lot of photos like this out there as well, where kind of the fish are all displayed, but they're all -- Many of them are kind of in a pile, and so pictures like this can still be really valuable to the FISHstory project. However, it gets a little bit harder to be able to identify all of the fish within those photos.

I wanted to show you kind of all of these historic fishing photos as examples, because we're really interested in getting some information from you guys on whether you would be willing to bring photos, if we had a scanning event at your in-person Mackerel Cobia AP meeting later this year, and we wanted to take a pause, for a second, and see if there's kind of anyone here on the AP who might be willing to bring photos, or maybe you know folks within your kind of community who

may have photos that we could reach out to about some of these scanning events, and so I will pause here for a second, to see if anyone has any questions or if anyone might be willing to bring some photos to your in-person meeting coming up.

MS. WIEGAND: I see that Ira has got his hand up.

MR. LAKS: I will definitely bring some photos.

MS. BYRD: Awesome. Thanks, Ira.

MS. WIEGAND: Keith.

MR. BOWEN: I think that, between my dad and, we could scrounge up some photos to bring, too.

MS. BYRD: That's awesome. Thanks so much, Keith.

MS. WIEGAND: Tony.

MR. BENEVENTO: I believe that I can get you some real good photos from Mayport, back in the 1960s and 1970s, and, also, the Jacksonville Offshore Sportfishing Club has a whole gallery of them, but somebody has got to remind me to bring them, when our in-person meeting happens.

MS. BYRD: I will definitely be reaching out to you, and probably give you a call to remind you, and thanks so much, and thanks so much about mentioning the Jacksonville Offshore Sportfishing Club, too.

MS. WIEGAND: Bill Palmer.

MR. PALMER: I've got some friends here that have fished in Daytona and St. Augustine that I believe I can get some pictures from and bring them to the meeting, also.

MS. BYRD: That's awesome. Thanks so much, Bill, and all of you guys. I really appreciate it, and I will be happy to reach out to folks, to kind of remind you in advance of your in-person meeting, and, if anyone else on the line is able to dig up photos, just let me know, or let Christina know, and we would love to have them, and so thanks so much for so many of you guys being able to bring photos.

I guess one other question I have, before moving away from FISHstory, is I wondering -- I know Tony already mentioned the Jacksonville Offshore Sportfishing Club, but I was wondering if you guys knew of any other kind of opportunities to gather historic photos in your community. I know that Aaron has provided me with a couple of names, from the meeting that you all had last fall, and Alana Harrison, who is from the Outer Banks area, suggested that we go to the Outer Banks History Center, which is in Manteo, and they had a treasure trove. I mean, they had a huge archive of some of these historic fishing photos. If any of you guys know of other kind of folks within your community, or if you have museums, or kind of history centers, that might be good for us to reach out to, we would be all ears. Thomas, I see your question, to remind you to check with Ernie Foster from the Albatross Fleet, and so I will definitely do that. Thank you. Steve Donalson.

MR. DONALSON: I've got a couple of different clubs here in our area, and I can email you the contact information, but the Ancient City Gamefish Association is one, and then the Northeast Florida Marlin Association, and that's out of Camachee Marina. I can reach out to the presidents of those two clubs and ask them what their archives look like.

MS. BYRD: That would be awesome, Steve. Thanks so much.

MS. WIEGAND: I see that Ira has got his hand up.

MR. LAKS: I'm sure you've reached out to the West Palm Beach Fishing Club, but I actually have a question about FISHstory, and, you know, you mentioned that you're going to be looking more into, you know, better pictures with temporal information, but what about spatial, and is there a plan to sort of tie those two together, where you do have that complete information, especially in fish like, you know, Spanish and king mackerel, that are the probably forefront of range expansion, and is there any plans to maybe look at, in the recreational fishery especially, where these fish are expanding at different times, and see if there's a time shift, as to when they're being caught where? That would be interesting to find out, and I know you could track it through the commercial landings, with logbooks, but it might be a historical base for especially fish like that and mahi-mahi.

MS. BYRD: Ira, that's a great question, and so, as we're working to expand FISHstory, we're hoping to kind of not only expand its kind of temporal range, going through up into the 1980s, or maybe the early 1990s, but we're also looking to try to get that geographic coverage that we're talking about, and, right now, we're focusing most on kind of the South Atlantic states, but perhaps it would be good for us to reach out to places a little bit north of us, in Virginia and things like that, to get at some of the questions that you have, because that will give us an idea of kind of where these species were being caught in this kind of historic time period, and so we're working on that.

Then one other thing that I will note too is that we're kind of -- As we're working to expand the project, and we're really excited to get this new grant proposal, and there are going to be some folks from NC State, and some of the assessment folks from the Science Center, that are going to be working with us, and one of the things that they're really hoping to do is see if we can use these photos, once we get that kind of geographic, and kind of that spatial coverage, and temporal coverage, kind of over time, to see if kind of an index could be developed with these photos, because there's not a lot of information, particularly from the recreational fleets, before the mid to late 1970s, or early 1980s, and so we're going to be working with some folks to help us on some of those analytical things, once we're able to kind of grow the range of photos that we have. Does that answer your question, Ira?

MR. LAKS: Yes. Thank you. That would be very interesting to see, maybe along with fishing reports from papers and stuff too, as an added bonus.

MS. BYRD: Yes, and that's another good point too, Ira. I know that Rusty provided all these photos, but he also provided us with a lot of old newspaper articles and things like that, with kind of a captain-of-the-week, and so kind of getting some of that other information also helps kind of a complete the picture of what was being caught when, and that sort of thing, over time. I know some of those articles that Rusty provided were really wonderful, too.

All right, and so thank you, guys, for this FISHstory kind of information, and this was super helpful, and, if you think of any other people, or places, or museums or things, that might be helpful to reach out to, feel free to add them in the question window, or email Christina, or email me, and I will be getting in touch with many of you who noted that you might be able to bring photos in advance of the in-person meeting later this summer, just to kind of remind you, and so thank you so much.

Then there's one more project that I wanted to give you guys a quick update on, before kind of handing things back over to Ira and Christina, and so this is a project that we have been working with some outside researchers on, and I talked with you guys a little bit about it last fall as well, and so this is research that's really focused on trying to gather kind of baseline information about the knowledge, confidence in, and trust in using the citizen science process of collecting data to help inform fisheries management.

We are really interested in gathering this information from fishermen and scientists and managers in our region, with the idea that we would kind of ask these questions now, and then could ask them again in the future, to see if there are any changes about how kind of comfortable people are with using citizen science in a fisheries management context, kind of over time, and so the first stage of kind of this research is we were working with Rick Bonney, who is a Director Emeritus at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, and he has been our kind of citizen scientist, or one of our citizen science advisors, kind of our citizen science Yoda, or guru, who has been advising our program since its beginning.

What he did was he conducted interviews with a small group of fishermen, scientists, and managers, and they covered kind of these four main focus areas, the health of the fishery in the South Atlantic, whether or not there was sufficient data to support fisheries management, how familiar folks were with citizen science, and in particular the council's program, and then their overall support and faith in citizen science and in using citizen science data to kind of inform fisheries management.

I know that many folks sitting on the webinar helped participate in those interviews, and so I really thank you for doing that, and I learned a ton from this work, and, again, if folks want to check out those interview results, there is kind of a link in your slides, in your briefing book, that you can check it out.

What the hope was is we would use the information gathered through those interviews to put together some research that could gather that same sort of information, but from a much broader group of fishermen and scientists and managers. Rick, you know, talked to eighteen people, and there's a lot larger group of kind of scientists, fishermen, and managers that are in our region, and so we want to get information from a broader group.

We were really lucky to be able to find some funding to kind of help move this research forward, towards the end of last year, and so Rick Bonney is going to lead our research efforts to gather information from a broader group of scientists and managers, and he's going to use an online survey to do that, and then we're really excited to be partnering with a research team made up of Jennifer Sweeney-Tookes, who is at Georgia Southern, and is actually on the webinar today, and

Tracy Yandle, who used to work at Emory, and has recently moved to New Zealand, then Bryan Fluech, who is with Georgia Sea Grant.

They're going to work to gather information from a broader group of fishermen, through doing more of these interviews, and so I wanted to share a little bit of information about the work they're going to be doing with all of you guys, and I know Jennifer is online, and so, Jennifer, if you have things to add, just raise your hand, and we'll unmute you.

One of the things that Jennifer, and kind of her research team, are really trying to do is gather kind of diverse perspectives, from kind of a larger group of fishermen, and they wanted to design a sampling method that could be repeated in the future, and so, if they were interview kind of a group of fishermen now, and then, in five years, or ten years, we would be able to look to see if there were changes in folks' perspectives over time.

It's a little daunting, when thinking about trying to gather kind of information from commercial, recreational, and for-hire fishermen across all four of our Atlantic states, and, although we did get some funding, it's pretty limited, and so Jennifer, and her team, did a great kind of -- They came up with a great plan, we think, to kind of gather this information, and, as many people say, how do you eat an elephant? You eat it one bite at a time, and so they came up with a great plan to kind of take a first bite to gather this information from a broader group of fishermen.

Just to let you know a little bit about the interviews, and so, for the commercial and for-hire sector, they're trying to figure out kind of who is the population, or the universe, of fishermen that they might want to kind of interview, and so they looked at the NOAA permit database for all the South Atlantic permittees, and I think there are over 19,000 permittees, and so that is a good starting point, but that's still kind of daunting, and we don't have the funding to be able to interview that large of a group of people, and so they really decided to zero-in on two of our kind of big fisheries, and so they're going to be hoping to interview folks who have permits in the snapper grouper and the mackerel fisheries, and they're two of our kind of largest fisheries, and so we were really excited about this approach.

Then the number of snapper grouper and mackerel permittees is still pretty huge, and so they're looking to focus at kind of four geographical areas, to further kind of break down that universe into a manageable kind of sampling population, and, to help inform how they're breaking down our total region into four geographic areas, they're looking at things like recent landings for these kind of snapper grouper or mackerel species, and then also using some social science data that NOAA Fisheries has pulled together that looks at kind of snapshots of fishing communities, to see kind of species that are important to that community, and so they're kind of using that information together to figure out which four geographic areas to focus on. After kind of they limit the population on those four geographic areas, they will be kind of randomly selecting people from that pool to invite to do interviews.

The private recreational sector is a little bit different, and we don't have a kind of -- A license database for our federal fisheries, and so what they decided to focus on was to try to get kind of a universe of recreational fishermen that have kind of a demonstrated, or sustained, interest in fishing, and they were defining that as being a member of a fishing club, or a fishing organization, and so that could be everything from kind of a local fishing club, or a national fishing organization, or even kind of a fishing group on Facebook or other social media. They're using that to try to

define their kind of universe of anglers, and they're going to try to focus on the same four geographic regions that will be focused on for the commercial and for-hire fisheries, and so that's the plan for the recreational kind of sector.

As far as kind of recruiting fishermen to participate in the studies, for the commercial and for-hire sector, they're planning to send postcards, or make telephone calls, to kind of invite people to do these interviews. The private recreational sector is a little bit more challenging, and so things they're looking into are kind of sending emails to fishing organizations, or fishing clubs, communicating with folks via social media, and then, once they get in touch with organizations, basically asking for input on the best ways to kind of communicate, or share, or invite folks to participate in these interviews, via methods that the organizations may suggest.

If someone is game to do an interview, they're going to let that person kind of choose what method they would like to be interviewed, whatever is most comfortable for them, or easiest for them, and so folks can do phone interviews, and they can do online interviews, via kind of webinar or Zoom, or they could do an in-person interview, and so Jennifer and her team are going to be visiting each of these four geographic regions once, so they're able to hopefully do some in-person interviews with folks.

One of the main reasons that I am sharing all this information with you guys is to let you know that they're doing this work, and, if they contact you, or reach out to you, to ask if you would be willing to do an interview, I wanted to encourage you to consider participating. We really want to learn more about you guys' thoughts on citizen science, and using citizen science data in management, and so, if you are contacted, please consider doing one of these interviews. You guys have a lot of important insights that we're really trying to learn more about.

Then the last thing that I wanted to say is we're hoping to get a little more information from you guys for this project, and one of the things we're hoping to get input from you guys on are kind of suggestions for contacts for fishing clubs, or other fishing organizations, that may be good to reach out to, to see if they would be willing to participate in this research, and I know that Jennifer and Tracy and her crew have already started pulling a list together, and we're going to share information that we have, but, if you guys have specific contacts in clubs that would be good for us to reach out, we would love to get that from you, and you can kind of let us know today, put it in the question window, or kind of contact us later.

Then the other thing that we were really hoping to get some input from you guys on today too was suggestions for kind of recruiting folks to do these interviews. I shared information on our gameplan for recruitment, but I wanted to see if you guys had methods of what may work best to kind of ask commercial, for-hire, or recreational fishermen to participate in this process, and so, you know, is an email best, is a text best, or what do you guys think are kind of the best recruitment methods to get folks to participate in this work?

I will end there, and I will say, Jennifer, if I kind of mischaracterized anything, or left anything out, feel free to raise your hand, and then I really was looking to see if you guys have any input on either of these questions. First, Jennifer, I see you have your hand raised, and it looks like you're muted on your end, and so go ahead.

DR. SWEENEY-TOOKES: I just had to say that that was a beautiful explanation, Julia, and I think you explained that much better actually than I did the last time, and so, yes, she nailed it, and I'm really looking forward to the ideas and suggestions that you all have, and so thank you so much for thinking about this.

MS. BYRD: All right. William Jones, thank you so much, and I see you've put a couple of fishing clubs into the question window, and thanks so much for that, and, if anyone else has any kind of feedback on organizations that may be good for us to talk to, or suggestions on recruitment methods, please raise your hand. Ira, go ahead.

MR. LAKS: I think you could probably, you know, work with the MREP database, and that might help.

MS. BYRD: That's a great idea.

MR. LAKS: The Marine Resource Education Program is what I mean by MREP, not to confuse anybody.

MS. BYRD: Thanks, Ira. That's a great suggestion. Anyone else? If you don't have any suggestions right now, but things pop into your mind during the meeting, feel free to add them into the kind of question window, and we can capture them that way, or, if things pop into your mind afterwards, feel free to reach out to Christina or myself, and we have some other kind of folks typing things into the question window too, and thanks so much. That's so helpful to get kind of additional suggestions on how best to kind of identify private recreational fishermen, and so thanks so much for that, and keep up the ideas, and feel free to keep adding them to the question window as they come to you.

I guess a question about the recruitment methods is, for the commercial and for-hire fishery, it's mainly -- We're mainly thinking about -- Jennifer and crew are mainly thinking about contacting folks via postcard or phone call, and do you all think that that's efficient? I know we had a meeting earlier this week, and folks suggested maybe sending -- If we have phone numbers, to maybe send a text, or something like that, and I don't know if you guys have thoughts on that.

MS. WIEGAND: Will Jones.

MR. JONES: If you're doing it during the fishing season, definitely email, and a call is fine, but email is one of the best ways, because we're so busy, and we miss a lot of calls, and we have to filter through a lot of spam and all that stuff, and so definitely at least email, at the minimum.

MS. BYRD: Thanks, Will, and, Thomas, I saw you said that text is good for you. Any other thoughts on that, or with kind of private recreational folks? Do you think emails, newsletters, social media are kind of the best kind of approaches there, or do you have kind of other ideas or suggestions?

MS. WIEGAND: Tony.

MR. BENEVENTO: How long does the actual interview take?

MS. BYRD: I would defer a little bit to Jennifer on this. I know, when Rick Bonney did kind of that first short round of interviews, the interviews were around thirty to forty minutes, and, Jennifer, hop in there.

DR. SWEENEY-TOOKES: That's a great question, and, honestly, it depends a lot on the person and their own schedule and how much they would like to tell us. Usually interviews take about thirty minutes. If someone is feeling particularly salty, or has a lot to say, sometimes it takes an hour, but that's really just up to them, and we can be very efficient and get it done in twenty or thirty minutes.

MR. BENEVENTO: Okay. I don't have a suggestion then.

DR. SWEENEY-TOOKES: If I had given you a different timeframe, would you have had a suggestion?

MR. BENEVENTO: Well, I was going to say that we're in the midst of all these kingfish tournaments, and you could set up a booth at the tournament, and get -- You know, 200 or 300 people are going to walk through that are fishermen, but they're not going to sit for an hour and talk to you. You may be able to get set up for another time and date, but that was just an idea.

DR. SWEENEY-TOOKES: That's a good idea, and I'm glad that you mentioned that. Thank you.

MS. BYRD: All right. That's kind of all we had on the Citizen Science Program, unless you all have any kind of additional questions, or thoughts, for us, and, again, we can't thank you enough for kind of all of the feedback and input that you've provided and so for many of you offering to bring photos at your in-person meeting, and so, with that, I will turn it back over to you, Ira. Thanks so much.

MR. LAKS: Thank you, Julia. That was really good, and it's very interesting stuff. I'm excited to bring some pictures. I think we're going to move into a mackerel port meeting discussion now. Do we want to jump into that, or does anyone want to take a five-minute break? I think we can jump into it, and then we'll take a break after that. We'll go another half-hour or forty minutes. Does that sound good to everybody? If anyone wants a break, raise their hand. I don't see any hands, and so we're ready to start with the king and Spanish mackerel port meetings.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Well, I am excited to give this presentation to you guys. I'm going to go over, you know, just a little bit of background, for any new AP members, to sort of explain how we came to this idea of doing port meetings, and I'll go over some of the activities that are currently going on in the king and Spanish mackerel fisheries, many of which you guys are aware of. We'll note, again, those FMP goals and objectives, and then sort of get into the council's most recent discussions relative to port meetings.

If you guys will remember, this idea to hold port meetings came directly from advisory panel members. Way back in April of 2019, and then again most recently at your meeting in October, you had requested that the council set up a series of meetings where council members and staff would go up and down the coast and take time to meet informally with participants in the king and

Spanish mackerel fisheries, in order to try to gain a much more holistic understanding of the fishery.

I certainly don't need to be telling you guys this, but the king and Spanish mackerel fisheries are incredibly dynamic, and incredibly complex, and the council really realizes that it's important for them to have a full understanding of these dynamics, so that, when they're discussing management for these fisheries, they can take all of those different complexities into account.

Just to give you guys an update on some of the things that are going on in these fisheries, and sort of why now is a really opportune time to conduct these port meetings, one of the biggest being the Atlantic Spanish mackerel stock assessment, and I know you guys have been waiting to get the results of this stock assessment for a very long time, especially given that the assessment was completed back in July of 2022, and I'm not going to get into too many details of how this has sort of bounced back and forth with the Scientific and Statistical Committee, but, ultimately, at their meeting just earlier this week, the SSC did make catch level recommendations.

Those catch level recommendations are going to go to the council in June, and then, of course, you all will be meeting this summer to discuss that assessment, and there will likely be management needs, now that we've got those assessment results, and so this is really a great time to be holding port meetings, so that the council can gather a lot of information from stakeholders like yourselves, so that, when we're putting management into place, in response to this assessment, it's taking into account everything that is happening up and down the coast.

The other things that have been happening is, if you will remember at your October meeting, you guys also requested that the council review the current split season that's in place for Atlantic king mackerel in the Southern Zone, which is the commercial fishery, and the king mackerel fishery, in particular, has some of the most complex management that the South Atlantic Council deals with, and it has been subject to a lot of sort of small changes over the years, trying to get a management structure that's going to fit that fishery well, and so, again, this is sort of an opportunity for the council to take a step back, look at that fishery from a bigger picture, to decide what can be done to maybe simplify management or make management work a little bit better for fishermen.

Then, of course, the American Saltwater Guides Association requested that the council consider readding little tunny to the CMP FMP, and you all discussed this in October, and the council chose not to move forward with continuing to discuss this, but it is an issue that has come up a number of times, and is likely something that would come during port meeting discussions as well.

Then, of course, the objectives of the CMP FMP, and I gave you guys a brief presentation about this at the last meeting, and all of our FMPs are required, by Magnuson, to have a series of goals and objectives that help drive management, and the ones for the CMP FMP have not been updated since the early 1990s, meaning they are pretty out-of-date, and so one of the council's goals, with conducting these port meetings, will be to sort of revise all of these objectives that you see on your screen, to make sure that the new objectives going into the CMP FMP fit with the current goals of the fishery and the stakeholders.

One of the things we did at the March meeting, now that the council has sort of approved us moving forward with holding these port meetings, was we had a bit of a discussion with them on what they wanted to achieve, sort of, you know, let them start throwing things at the wall, to talk about what

do they feel like they need, or don't know, that they would like stakeholders to provide information on, and so, of course, they want to understand the complexity of these mackerel fisheries, looking at things like expansion and movement of the fisheries, and how fishermen are responding, and we've certainly heard, over and over and over again, with Spanish mackerel, as well as king mackerel, that we're seeing these species further and further north every year.

They want to understand how the fishery is really utilized and valued by different fleets and the different sectors, and, like I said, this is a dynamic fishery, particularly the commercial fleet, and how those dynamics play into fleet mobility, different markets, and sort of spatial seasonality of the fishery, and then environmental factors, like water quality, harmful algal blooms, and how are these things affecting the king and Spanish mackerel fisheries.

Then how they interact with other important fisheries, and, of course, I mentioned little tunny earlier, and cobia is also a part of this FMP, and how those fisheries may interact with cobia, and then, finally, what gears are currently being used, and how that has changed over time. King and Spanish mackerel has been subject to a number of regulation changes, both at the federal level as well as the state level, that have sort of altered how fishermen have chosen to prosecute these fisheries.

What are these meetings going to look like? We are still at the very, very beginning planning stages for these meetings, but the council has decided that they would like them to focus on king and Spanish mackerel, but, of course, to be prepared for other species to come up in discussion, like cobia and little tunny, to make sure that we're ready to sort of gather information on those species without losing focus on the purpose, which is going to be the king and Spanish mackerel fisheries.

These meetings are going to be open to all members of the public, and we're going to hold them up and down the coast, and so, like Tom mentioned in his update to you all, we've asked the Gulf Council if they would be interested in participating in something like this, and we'll be presenting to them at their August meeting, and then the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission has already agreed to be heavily involved, and so we'll be holding meetings all the way up to the southern end of Massachusetts.

Ultimately, there are sort of two things that will likely come out of this process, and one will be those revised goals and objectives for the FMP that I talked about, and the other will be a final report that includes not just notes from all the meetings, but a thematic analysis that will identify different patterns and themes that came up over and over again at these different port meetings, as we moved up and down the coast.

Next steps, and, like I said, we are at the very, very beginning stages of planning this meeting, and this is the first time you guys are hearing any details, and you will likely hear about it again this summer, and continuing forward for quite some time. We're really going to need to develop a structure for these port meetings and consider the best way to sort of facilitate them and have conversations with stakeholders that come to these meetings.

Again, like I said, we'll be coordinating with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, and we'll likely also be reaching out to the Mid-Atlantic and New England Fishery Management Councils as well, since we will be holding some of these meetings in their area of jurisdiction, and

so that was a very brief presentation, but that's where we are with port meetings currently, and I've got a couple of discussion questions for you.

Perhaps the most important, and the one that I expect, you know, to get a lot of input from you guys on, is what do you hope to accomplish with these port meetings? This is a request that came from the AP, and so the council would really like to make sure that the AP's goals and objectives are met, as we go through this, and so I will sort of start with that big-picture question for you guys, and, you know, I hope to get some feedback from you on what you would like to see come out of these port meetings, and what information you think the council really needs to understand about these fisheries to improve management. Go ahead, Ira, and you don't have to raise your hand. You're the chair, and you get to run things.

MR. LAKS: Guys, I just really would like you just to give your opinions to this, and, really, you know, it's a wide range of area that you guys are in, and you have different needs in both of these fisheries in your different areas, and you're all from different sectors, and, you know, from my point of view, and having this on my mind, for many years in this advisory panel, is that, you know, this fish is subject to range expansion, and changing of where it was historically caught, and, in the commercial industry, there is fleet movement that's going to have to, you know, come into this, and how do you deal with different state licenses and access to infrastructure for commercial fishermen?

As far as like the for-hire industry, I know that the Mid-Atlantic should have CMP for-hire permits, and very few do, and I think we need to get a handle on that, and I personally, Christina, would like to know if the for-hire VTRs in the Mid-Atlantic even have Spanish and king mackerel on them, or what some of those catches are, and what the number of permits are out of the fleet up that way, and just get a better handle on the recreational fishery. I know I see a lot more, you know, reports of people that are catching them all the way in New Jersey and New York, and I think, until we get a better handle on that, we're going to be in the dark, and so I would love you guys to jump in and elaborate on what you would like. I see, Thomas, you've got your hand raised.

MR. NEWMAN: I guess I will kind of go into the questions, the discussion question page, and what I really would like to see out of these port meetings is kind of like maybe what everybody has seen in the past ten or fifteen years, maybe, especially as we go further north, because I know, like I said, more fishermen are seeing more mackerel further north, and I would like to know whether or not they're capitalizing on the opportunities, or they're just noticing the fish jumping or whatnot, whether it's more of a directed fishery versus a bycatch fishery, and where they think the fisheries is going, you know, on the for-hire sector and on the commercial sector, and what they need.

I mean, I was talking to a fishermen in Maryland, just a few weeks ago, and he was concerned with the early closures in the commercial fisheries, and that the fish aren't even in Maryland yet, but when they go to the 500-pound trip limit, and I'm just kind of curious to see what they want, what they need further north, and what they think they, you know, might could harvest, on both the recreational and the commercial side. I will let somebody else go, and I will keep thinking.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. I don't see any other hands up, but I am going to, you know, encourage you guys to think pretty hard about this. These port meetings are going to take a lot of sort of time to develop, both council time and time for this AP, and so I think it's really important to make sure

that you all come away from this process feeling like there's a product moving forward that is going to be beneficial for you and your businesses and your fisheries.

MR. LAKS: I see Steve has got his hand up, and Thomas again, I believe.

MR. ENGLISH: From the commercial side, and that's what I'm speaking for, out of the port meetings, what I hope to accomplish is that every state is on the same page with how we're going to land the fish for the commercial sector, and, by that, I mean, we don't need Florida to have a 500-pound bycatch limit after the quota is met, and North Carolina to have a 200-pound, and Virginia to have a 2,000-pound, and right on up the line. We need to get some consensus, and all the states need to be in line as to how we're going to land these Spanish mackerel, and, in particular, after the quota is met, because we're catching our quota up so fast, and that's always going to be an issue, and so that's my main -- That's one of my main goals for this, and I will have some stuff on some other stuff later. Thank you.

MR. LAKS: Thomas.

MR. NEWMAN: I would definitely be willing to help organize and recruit participants, in North Carolina for sure, and I know North Carolina has already got a lot of data that we got from that white paper that we put together in 2019, to see where most of the mackerel were landed on the commercial side anyway, and so that would, you know, identify where we need to hold these meetings at. Like I said, definitely be in touch with me, because, like I said, I've been pretty active on this issue, on the state and federal level, and so any help I can be with you all, Christina, just reach out to me, email or call, because I am definitely all for these port meetings.

MS. WIEGAND: Thanks, Thomas. I am going to keep pushing you guys to think a little bit more on this, and so we've heard from Steve and Thomas, who are talking a lot about Spanish mackerel, and, of course, with the stock assessment coming down the line, Spanish mackerel will be a huge topic of discussion, but I'm also curious to hear from some of you guys on the line that I know fish for king mackerel as well, and what maybe you would like to see come out of this for the king mackerel fishery.

MR. LAKS: Christina, I would be curious -- Like, you know, Keith, what do you think, and you're a traveling fisherman, right, and you follow the fish, and, if the fish go north, and you have to travel, and how do you navigate different places, and different licenses, and I would also be curious from some of the recreational guys, you know, especially out of Jacksonville, where they mentioned all the tournaments. I mean, do we really have a handle on all these tournaments, and how many fish are getting caught, regardless of the fact of what's getting sold, but, you know, it's targeting large fish, and do we not have a good enough handle to know how many of these there are, and, you know, are we underestimating catch, because of all these tournaments? What's the economic value of them?

I would like to hear from you guys from that, and you know, there's other things that, personally, I would -- Like I just listened to some of the SSC meeting, and they were talking about fishermen's portfolios, and, you know, I know this is a hard sell coming up, but there's going to be a point where these fish are stretched out across the lines, and the permits are going to be in one area, and are we going to have to change our permitting system, or are there things that we can do, like short-term leases of permits, or re-registering to different boats, so that, when fish aren't in Florida, and

they're in Virginia, or north of there even, in years to come, and can I let someone fish my permit for half the year?

All things like that, and I want you guys to just think out of your head and what things like you would like to just see come out of it, and, also, for some of the for-hire guys, I know you had mentioned about overcapacity in the for-hire fleet, and too many charter vessels, and when is enough enough, and so, if you guys can jump in with all of that, I would appreciate it. Keith, I see your hand up.

MR. BOWEN: I think, as far as management in our area, I feel like it's pretty solid right now, and I feel like -- You know, I heard somebody mention something about possibly doing what Ira mentioned before, with having one full season versus two, and that could be something that might be addressed, but, I mean, as of right now, it's working pretty good.

I feel like, if things continue to trend north, there will definitely have to be some things looked at for licenses, like Ira was saying, but, as of right now, until fish -- You know, a big number of fish are starting to be caught up that way, you know, I think everything is, you know, working really well at this point.

MR. LAKS: Tony B., go ahead.

MR. BENEVENTO: Ira, you asked about, you know, the tournaments and so forth in Jacksonville, and you're 100 percent accurate, and we follow the fish. If they're up in Georgia, and you have to fish off of Savannah, then you need to get not only a Florida license, but a Georgia license, and, you know, run through thousands of gallons of gasoline to chase them. If there is a temperature inversion, or something, off of Jacksonville, it messes things up, and we've gone as far south as Canaveral before, again to chase the fish.

Now, twenty years, or fifteen years, ago, tournaments used to fill out. You know, a thousand boats was not uncommon, and 400, or 500, boats was about the norm. Since the recession of 2006 to 2009, those numbers have been cut way, way, way down, and our local tournament probably has 300 boats, and it's gone to one day of fishing, and a two-fish aggregate, and some of the other tournaments, or most of the other tournaments, are one-day tournaments, largest fish only, and so I don't think these tournaments are putting a dent in the population, at least not like they may have in the 1980s and 1990s, when they were at the apex, and I believe my friend from St. Augustine, who fished the SKA, can also attest to the fact that these tournaments are not what they used to be.

MS. WIEGAND: Thank you all for that input, and so, sort of moving down the list of questions, I've got how should we go about identifying key communities? Sort of, when you think about port meetings for king and Spanish mackerel, what places do you think, well, of course they have to hold a meeting in, you know, Hatteras or what have you, and staff will certainly pull landings, and permits, to try to identify the best places to hold these meetings, but you all are in these communities, and you all know the fishermen, and what communities sort of jump out at you as, you know, you're going to hold port meetings, you would making a huge mistake if you didn't hold them here?

MR. LAKS: I would say, for south Florida, you probably need one in the Lauderdale area, and then probably the Jupiter/Stuart/Port Salerno area, and then probably somewhere -- I would defer

a little more to Keith on this, but probably Sebastian, or Cape Canaveral, or somewhere close to both of them, or in between, and then maybe up at Ponce Inlet, and, Keith, if you jump in. After Thomas, we'll go to Keith.

MR. NEWMAN: Definitely, for North Carolina, Hatteras and Wanchese are the two big communities that catch mackerel in North Carolina, and we do have some harvested down there in Carteret and Pamlico County commercially. Recreationally, probably like Wilmington, or Morehead, or probably both, but Tom, or Will, would probably know more about that, and there's a little bit of commercial fishing down there as well, but, up north of Virginia, I think maybe Ocean City, Maryland, and I know there's some people in Chincoteague that commercially fish for Spanish mackerel, and there are some further up the Chesapeake, but that area is kind of like -- I don't know the most central location for that, but I can -- I know some good contacts to get a recommendation in that area, but definitely kind of like in that Maryland and Virginia, and there's a third state right there too, but, like I said, just keep in contact with me, Christina, for any help up that way.

MR. LAKS: Go ahead, Keith, and then Will, and then Tom Roller.

MR. BOWEN: Ira, I think that Ponce Inlet and Daytona would be a good place, and Port Canaveral, and probably Stuart, down in that area, and I'm not too sure, once you get south, you know, the Lauderdale area, where would be the best, but I think, you know, those would be the best in this area here.

MR. LAKS: Go ahead, Will.

MR. JONES: I will just second what Thomas Newman said. Wanchese, Morehead City, and then somewhere around Wilmington, Southport, or Wrightsville Beach, but North Carolina would probably be good with, you know, three different places.

MR. LAKS: Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you. I'm going to reiterate what Thomas said, and Will said, and, obviously, we have to have some sort of meeting, you know, that includes the Hatteras and Dare County area, and, you know, Wanchese has always been a good central location for that. Where I really struggle with is if North Carolina -- Do we have two meetings, or do we have three meetings, and my personal feeling is that we have kind of three regions in this state, and the fishery out of Wilmington is going to be very different than the fishery out of Beaufort and Morehead City, which is also a very central area for a big part of the state, and I struggle that, if we were just to have one meeting in the southeast part of the state, if we would really encompass the whole fleet, if that makes sense. Wilmington is a couple of hours away, and you've got Southport and Oak Island and all that sort of stuff, and so, you know, we may -- Three meetings might be ideal for this state.

MR. LAKS: Christina, I think, the amount of meetings, I think that, you know, in Florida, you maybe want to do something like West Palm Beach, or Jupiter, where you can reach Fort Lauderdale and the Stuart area, and then maybe Cape Canaveral, and then maybe somewhere -- You know, as the gentleman who was talking about the tournaments up in the Jacksonville and St. Augustine area, and maybe, you know, Flagler Beach or something, because I know we're limited

on resources, and we can't have a meeting in every town, and so that might be something to look at, to space out the fishery in Florida, because the geographic range is so long.

MS. WIEGAND: Thank you guys, so much, for this input. You know, we're still a ways off from selecting specific places, and the number of meetings, but this information from you really helps me groundtruth the landings information, and the permits information, that I'm pulling, and so this is incredibly helpful input. Thank you.

MR. LAKS: Go ahead, Steve.

MR. ENGLISH: Ira, I think Stuart has got to be one of the central locations for Spanish mackerel. I mean, it's the center of the Spanish mackerel fishery, and they're caught in Fort Pierce and Port Salerno, and so, you know, Stuart or Fort Pierce, but I think Stuart is probably going to be your best bet, right there on the beach, and it's close to everybody, and you've had meetings there before, and I think that's almost a must.

MR. LAKS: Thank you, Steve.

MS. WIEGAND: All right, and so one of my next questions, or I guess more of an ask, really, is would you guys be willing to help organize and recruit participants for port meetings, and so, Thomas, thank you so much for already jumping in and volunteering to do this, but I think, from, you know, my perspective as staff, having you guys help participate in these port meetings, and help recruit people, is going to be essential to their success. You guys are the leaders in the community, and you guys know the fishermen in the community, and you know the groups that we need to have come out and participate, and so I'm hopeful that there are a number of you that are going to be willing to not only attend these, but sort of help organize and reach out to fishermen in your area to attend.

MR. LAKS: I will be absolutely willing to help out.

MR. ENGLISH: I will, too.

MR. JONES: Definitely, with social media, it's pretty easy to do that, and I definitely will be doing that, to help out.

MR. BOWEN: I will also be able to help out on that part of it.

MS. WIEGAND: Excellent. Thank you, guys. I will definitely be reaching out to you, as we move further down in this process and start identifying specific locations, and so you're going to be sick of having me email you, but I really appreciate your offer to help recruit and get people involved in this process.

I guess the last thing that I wanted to have a brief conversation about how was how you would recommend that staff facilitate these discussions. Like I said, we're going to start trying to narrow down some semblance of a structure for these meetings, and we want this to be very different from sort of the traditional public comment that fishermen are used to experiencing at say a council meeting or during a public hearing. We would like this to be much more discussion-based and interactive, and so you guys, as AP members, have attended a number of meetings over the years,

and not just AP meetings, but I know that many of you were around when we were doing visioning for snapper grouper, or have attended other sort of stakeholder-driven meetings, and so I was curious if any of you all had any thoughts, or perspectives, on how you would like to see meetings run.

Do you prefer, you know, things like having someone at the front, who is writing down thoughts as people present them, or do you prefer more of a question-and-answer-style format, or do you like breakout groups, where we would, you know, move fishermen into these small groups to talk about specific things, and so just if you all have any thoughts on how you best like to interact in these types of meetings.

MR. LAKS: Go ahead, Thomas.

MR. NEWMAN: I know North Carolina put a white paper together in 2019, when we had our first commercial Spanish mackerel closure, and that handout was super helpful, and it was super informational, and it was mostly graphs and tables, and I think it was only ten or twelve pages long, and I think something like that, for each state, but also to give like an overall, you know, coast-wide fisheries picture, and I think something like that, that's sent out ahead of time, like maybe a week ahead of time, that people could print off, and, also, there would be handouts at the meeting, and I think that would help facilitate some of this discussion, and the same thing with this presentation.

Like have these same questions kind of directing -- Kind of directing the flow of the meeting, and I don't think that you need to break it up into workgroups or anything, but I think there needs to be some questions given to the participants ahead of time, to go ahead and kind of focus the meeting, and you could go over these questions like we're doing right now, one by one, and keep the crowd engaged, and, you know, you can pick out some of the people who maybe aren't being quite as vocal too, you know just trying to keep everybody involved in the meeting, but I really like the kind of open format that we have here on this AP, and I think that kind of same open format would be great on these mackerel port meetings.

MR. LAKS: Steve and then Tom Roller.

MR. ENGLISH: I think mainly you need the representatives from the Atlantic States Commission, that can make sure they're there and the states are represented, so that we can get, you know, some uniformity between them, and I think that's one of the main goals that we should be trying to achieve, is uniformity in what we come up with, and so that's something I definitely think we should have in there.

MS. WIEGAND: Ira, I think Tom Roller has got his hand up.

MR. ROLLER: I am just waiting for the permission.

MR. LAKS: Go ahead.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you, Ira. I just wanted to say that I attended the dolphin workshops back in early 2020, right before COVID started, and I really enjoyed that format, and I think it was really helpful, and it was very similar to the AP, but staff had a couple little exercises, like a graph

with the fishery, how it has changed over time, stuff like that, and I thought we had some really, really good discussions from that.

MR. LAKS: I was just going to say that I don't think we can really break it up into sectors, and it's got to be an open conversation, and we have to kind of format it in a way that we're not spending too much time, if there's people there from all sectors, and I think a question-and-answer time, maybe even at the beginning, might disarm some of the angst that's in the room and help facilitate the conversation. Go ahead, Charlie.

MR. LOCKE: I think you definitely want to keep the sectors together, because I think there's a lot of clarity when you get the groups in there, and they kind of hear all the information, because I know, like in the mahi ones we've had before, you know, the recreational crowd -- A lot of times, they have such a misguided view of things, and then, when they get in there, and they actually see the numbers and the facts, and what's being caught by the longliners, and they've only got 8 percent of the quota, and the recreational has got 92, and everybody's eyes kind of get opened, and so I definitely believe it's better to have all the user groups together. I think it's more informative, and I learn things about their fisheries, and they learn things about mine, and I would definitely recommend keeping all the sectors together.

MR. LAKS: Does anyone else have any thoughts on how we can make it work for everybody? Have you got your hand raised again, Charlie?

MR. LOCKE: I meant to put it down. Sorry.

MS. WIEGAND: I don't see any other hands popping up, but I just wanted to say thank you, guys, for being willing to provide this input, for offering your help in organizing these port meetings, and, like I said, this is a request that came from the AP, and I think, as we go down this process, we're going to be able to get some just really fantastic information out of it, and so you'll probably hear about this again at our meeting this summer, and I will keep you all updated.

MR. LAKS: Go ahead, Steve.

MR. ENGLISH: I have one concern, from some of the paperwork we've got here, and I need to figure out what we're doing with this. On our CMP FMP objectives sheet, if you go down the list, we've got Objectives 1 through 8, and Objective 5 just jumps out at me, and I am disturbed by it. Objective 5 says we redistribute the allowable catch of mackerel between commercial and recreational in the 1970s, and this has no place in this, and this is not where that should be discussed.

First of all, if you go back to the 1970s, where there is no information and all, about 95 percent of it was caught by the commercial sector, and so you really don't want to do that, to begin with, and I'm sure somebody has got some numbers somewhere that they're going to put in there to try and -- There's a reason for this, and I would like to eliminate Objective 5 from being presented in this document in this, because this has no place in this part of this discussion. This should be for our management discussions, and it should be based on true, accurate numbers and not something that we have no numbers for.

Earlier, when we were doing the scientific thing, I heard the girl say that there are no numbers from the 1970s, and, yet, we have something like this on this piece of paper, and so I would like to make a motion that we take Objective 5 off of this CMP FMP objective sheet.

MR. LAKS: I don't know if we can do that. Christina, I think we can suggest it, but I don't think we can do that, right?

MS. WIEGAND: You guys can certainly make a motion to recommend it to the council, and I will say that part of this process will be to completely revise these objectives. The council is certainly aware that they're dated, given that they have not been updated since the early 1990s, and so part of the discussion that the council will have, and then that will come back to you, will be related to these objectives, and so I would say it's perfectly within the AP's purview to recommend to the council to remove this Objective 5.

MR. LAKS: Steve, would you like to make a motion to do that?

MR. ENGLISH: **Yes, I would like to make a motion to eliminate Objective 5.**

MR. BOWEN: I will second that.

MR. LAKS: Is there any discussion of that? Hearing no discussion, I guess we're going to take a vote. **All those in favor, raise your hands.**

MS. WIEGAND: Give me just a quick second, Ira, or I guess, Myra, are you going to type the names up on the hands raised, so everyone can see whose hand is currently raised?

MS. BROUWER: Sure. I can do that.

MS. WIEGAND: Thank you.

MR. LAKS: **Is there anyone opposed to the motion? Is there anyone abstains?**

MS. BROUWER: If you could call out the opposed again, and there was still some hands raised, I think, from before.

MR. LAKS: Okay. **Is there anyone who is opposed to the motion?** Please raise your hand. Is that everybody?

MS. WIEGAND: There are some people that haven't voted, and you could ask for abstentions.

MR. LAKS: **Is there any abstentions? One abstention. The motion passes.**

MS. WIEGAND: Just one thing that I want to note, before, Tony, we got to you, is that this is certainly not the last time that you all will see these objectives, and there will likely be meetings, if not this summer, then certainly soon after that, where the AP will discuss these objectives in a lot more detail, and so this will not be the last time that you guys have the opportunity to look at these.

MR. LAKS: Tony, go ahead.

MR. BENEVENTO: Christina, I think you probably answered it, and why opposed it, but shouldn't we put like maybe a sentence of rationale, as to why we opposed it?

MS. WIEGAND: The discussion that was had around the motion will certainly be captured in the AP report that's provided to the council. Absolutely.

MR. BENEVENTO: Okay. That's good.

MR. LAKS: Rusty.

MR. HUDSON: I am looking for the final --

MR. LAKS: **I think it was seven in favor and one abstain.**

MR. HUDSON: Thank you.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Well, that's all I had for port meetings, Ira. Thank you, all, for the discussion.

MR. LAKS: There is one more thing that I wanted to add to the port meeting discussion, real quick, Christina, if that's okay, and that's, you know, I know that we're going to have the port meetings, and people are free to bring up whatever they want, right, but the way it looks to me is we're not advertising little tunny, right, and that's not going to be on the agenda, or be free to people to comment on?

MS. WIEGAND: Correct, and it won't be on the agenda, and the focus on these port meetings is going to be king and Spanish mackerel. The council just wanted to make sure that staff was prepared, particularly as we move up into the Mid-Atlantic region, where some of these topics that the council has talked about in the past may come up, to make sure that, you know, we can gather information from fishermen on those things that may be important, but still be able to sort of turn it back to the main focus, which will be king and Spanish mackerel.

MR. LAKS: Okay. I'm just making sure, because I realize the value of the king and Spanish mackerel, and I don't know if that's the appropriate place to get sidetracked with that, and so thank you. Steve English.

MR. ENGLISH: Just one more thing that might be of interest in these port meetings, and really, because we'll have a lot of people at them that are interested, but is trying to come up with a verifiable recreational landings system -- If we can come up with that, then we'll have numbers that are accurate on both sides, and we won't be in the position we're in in this, and, when we have meetings like these port meetings, we want to have accurate data to give to everybody. Right now, we don't have accurate data on the Spanish mackerel from, you know, the recreational side, and so I'm just thinking that maybe that might be something that we want to, you know, pursue, is maybe some ideas on how to get verifiable, accurate recreational landings, you know, something we can do with that, and that's about it.

MR. LAKS: I agree with you, Steve, and I think that's a much larger conversation that's going on throughout all of fishery management, especially in the Southeast, and I don't know if that's something that we probably want to put down as a goal, because I don't think that will be accomplished by the time we get to these meetings, and so I don't really want to bog that down, but I definitely hear what you're saying about that, and I think there's processes, as slow as they are, that work towards that, if that's an okay answer, that we don't put it down in writing.

MR. ENGLISH: Yes, that's fine with me, and I'm just -- I just know that's something we need, and that's the one thing that we have to have, and so as long as we work towards that.

MR. LAKS: Rusty, go ahead.

MR. HUDSON: Thank you, Ira. Anyway, I agree that part of the recreational sectors, and I say that in the plural, are providing information, but it would be nice to have an overarching picture of all the sectors, eventually. Thank you.

MS. WIEGAND: Well, that's all I had, Ira, and I didn't know if you wanted to take a five-minute break now or keep rolling forward.

MR. LAKS: That's up to these guys. If you want a little break, raise your hand.

MS. WIEGAND: We've got hands going up.

MR. LAKS: All right. Let's take a quick, five-minute break, guys.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MS. WIEGAND: Ira, I've got time, and I'm ready to continue whenever you're ready to continue. I'm sure that people are trickling back to their computers.

MR. LAKS: All right. Back to it, and so we're going into South Atlantic research recommendations, and we're going to get an overview from Christina and Chip, and I will turn it over to them.

DR. COLLIER: Christina, I will start this off, if that's all right.

MS. WIEGAND: Take it away, Chip.

DR. COLLIER: All right. Thank you, all, for the time today. The South Atlantic Council updates their research and monitoring plan every two years, and the reason that they have a research and monitoring plan is, one, it's a requirement of the Magnuson-Stevens Act that we do have one that we provide to the Southeast Fisheries Science Center, as well as to the Secretary, to make sure that items are being addressed in a timely fashion.

The research and monitoring plans, they're supposed to identify fisheries, fishery interactions, habitats, and other areas of research that are necessary for management purposes, and these research priorities shall be established for five years, updated as necessary, and submitted to the Secretary and regional Science Centers, as I just had mentioned. What we're trying to do right

now is take a broader approach, trying to get feedback from all of our APs and not just the Mackerel Cobia AP, but all of them, including the SSC, in order to have a broader list of items to include in our research and monitoring plan.

One of the reasons for this is, as we go into ecosystem-based fisheries management, that's going to be requiring much more information than what we had in the past, and some of it might be requiring surveys, which are challenging to do for federal and council staff, because of limitations on the questions that we're able to ask, and so it might be a good idea to use some of the academic partners that we have in the region to ask some of these questions of our stakeholders.

In Attachment 4, you're going to see a series of research recommendations that we've developed, or put together, for mackerel and cobia species in the region. The first two that we have listed up there really focus on the stock assessments for king and Spanish mackerel. For king mackerel, we have a stock assessment coming up in 2025, and many of these items that we have listed here -- I am not going to go through them all, and they're very assessment related, and they're not necessarily the best ones for some of the stakeholders to get engaged with, but I think one of the big ones is the item listed down there last, is the FISHstory, trying to get some of this length data from the 1950s to the 1970s.

We had talked with a stock assessment scientist, back after the last assessment completed, and he said this information would be very useful for king mackerel. It's a stock assessment that goes back to the 1900s, and that's why we had developed it as one of our items that we included in FISHstory, trying to get this length data.

The next assessment that we have up there is Spanish mackerel research priorities, and some of these come from the most recent stock assessment that was done for Spanish mackerel, and it's still being discussed by the SSC, and it was discussed just yesterday, and so we've included some of their comments in there, and we would look to additional comments that come of the AP members might have to include in this.

Once again, I'm not going to go through all of these, and these are fairly technical, but, if you want to go over to the next page, I know this is one of the items that has been mentioned already today, is talking about climate change, and we listed both king and Spanish mackerel for species to look into for changes in species distribution, changes in movements or reproductive patterns, and we think that's very important for the Spanish and king mackerel fishery. Now I'm going to transfer over to Christina, and she's much more in-tune with the social and economic priorities, and so, Christina, if you want to take those away.

MS. WIEGAND: Thanks, Chip. We just have a few social and economic priorities listed here, and, like Chip, I'm not going to go over every single one, but I did want to highlight just a couple. First, you know, providing updated estimates of recreational economic values for our council-managed species, and that's something that we've been missing for a number of years, and we could really use some additional information on, as well as developing some estimates, or models, to look at the response of angler behavior to regulation changes, which ultimately will help the council craft better regulations.

Then, as a social scientist, I like to dig into some of the more social, as opposed to economic, aspects of fisheries, and so one of the things that the council is really interested in is finding a way

to quantify current and baseline access to fishing infrastructure throughout the South Atlantic region.

We've heard, not just from this AP, but also from the Snapper Grouper AP and the Dolphin Wahoo AP, that access to working waterfronts is becoming increasingly challenging for fishermen in our area, and so understanding what access is currently like to fishing infrastructure ultimately can help the council better understand sort of community dependence and the cultural importance of fishing activities throughout the region, and so those were just the few that I wanted to highlight, and we can scroll back to the top, but what we're really looking for here is, and correct me I'm wrong, Chip, but feedback from the AP, if there's anything here that you think should be a top priority, or if there's anything that you feel is missing from these lists.

DR. COLLIER: Yes, that's exactly right, Christina, and I think it's also important to note that, if fishermen are seeing something different on the water than what they've seen in the past, it's good to let us know early. Quite often, it takes time to get some of these research ideas into research then completed and then written up, and so it is about a three or four-year cycle, and so, if you're seeing something now, and you want that to be addressed, I think it's a good opportunity to put it out there and see if anybody is willing to do some research on it.

MR. LAKS: Rusty, go ahead.

MR. HUDSON: I just wanted to shift the thought a little bit, to something I've heard through the decades, about the period during World War II, where all of our inlets were closed, and then, after a couple of years, they opened it up, nearshore daytime only, and Spanish mackerel was a big deal, and it fed a lot of people, and so you might want to try to kind of earmark that period, because it was a net and hook-and-line combination effort back then, but it only lasted for a couple of years, until World War II ended, and so it's just a thought, that there is a possible picture of the population of Spanish mackerel, if you can assemble the numbers, and I just wanted to throw that out there. Thank you.

MR. LAKS: Go ahead, Thomas.

MR. NEWMAN: The first bullet point under Spanish mackerel, with the observer coverage, I've said this so many times that I feel crazy saying it again, but all of our data from North Carolina, from the observer coverage, is in the Northeast Fisheries Center, Science Center, and there is a multitude of discard data, catch length data, and, I mean, it's huge, and no one has yet to tap into that to help manage Spanish mackerel. That has to start to be incorporated in these stock assessments and the general abundance of Spanish mackerel.

Also, you had mentioned SEAMAP, underneath the king mackerel, and the NEAMAP surveys, and I mentioned it at the last meeting, and it's in the meeting minutes, but the NEAMAP surveys had more young-of-the-year samples in the last three years than the SEAMAP study had, and so we have to start using these northern scientific studies to look and see what's there, and it would help a lot with the climate change stuff as well, because these fish are moving, and they're expanding.

The data is there, but people just have not looked for them. I mean, it's not even a thing of getting new data, and the data has been there, and I also think we definitely need some fishery-independent

surveys for these pelagic species, and I've been running that through my head, and just I would love to help out with that, any way I can, and I guess I need to get up with Sea Grant, or some other research organization, and I just don't know -- How many years of data would you need on something like that for it to be used for management?

I feel like you would need at least a few years, and we've got to get started on something like that as fast as we can, because these species are way too important not to have a whole lot broader range of, you know, surveys and sampling programs in place. I mean, some of the numbers in that Spanish mackerel stock assessment were just straight up pitiful. I mean, it was in the dozens of fish, for some years on some of these surveys, and that can't keep happening. We've got the infrastructure here, and we've just got to get the numbers ran through the scientists, through a biological survey, to validate what we're seeing.

MR. LAKS: Will, go ahead.

MR. JONES: Talking about observations of changes we've seen over the years, and, I mean, I'm a young guy, but I have noticed, in my lifetime, that we're catching Spanish mackerel around Cape Lookout earlier and earlier, and, you know, I don't know about from year to year, but definitely over time, and in colder water too, and not just like we're getting warmer water temperatures earlier, but I'm catching them in colder water than I used to. I mean, I caught some in March in fifty-eight-degree water, and it was weird, but every year does seem like -- Or every few years, it seems like we're catching them earlier and earlier, and that's just an observation that I've made, and other people have brought up to me as well, around our area.

MR. LAKS: Thank you. Go ahead, Bill.

MR. PALMER: I'm good with what's been said, and I think it was Steve that was talking about that we really need to get a handle on this quickly, and I totally agree with that. We don't need to be overestimating in a guess, and we need to have facts, so that we know that this is pretty much our stop number, that we can depend that our commercial boys are able to work with, and live with, but the recreational -- We've got to really get a handle on that, because we have no idea what's being caught out there right now on king, or on the Spanish, and that's it.

MR. LAKS: Steve, do you mind if I jump in for a second, and then I will let you go, and I would like to just piggyback on that, and also what Steve English had said earlier, when we were having the discussion about the port meetings.

The council is looking at doing a recreational reporting permit, for either an individual or a vessel, and they haven't determined what, but I think Christina, or Tom, can tell us that -- I think they're leaning on not including a permit for king and Spanish mackerel, and I think it would be important that we get this information, and we heard how valuable king and Spanish mackerel were, and I would be interested, and, after we go through the list, if you guys comment on that, and if you would like to make a motion to the council to suggest that we do include them in any kind of recreational permit that goes forward, and I have a question for you, Steve, before you go.

With the Spanish mackerel observer coverage, and they have cast nets down there, and that probably would be difficult, because not everyone is a federally-permitted boat, right, and so I

don't think the state has any observer process, and so, Steve, if you could speak on both of those and what you wanted to talk about, and I'm sorry to jump ahead of you.

MR. ENGLISH: That was my exact thought, Ira, was the observer coverage, and the only observer coverage we have is in the gillnet fishery, to my knowledge, and there is none in the cast net or handline or recreational, any of it, and I don't know of any observer coverage in those fisheries, and, just like you alluded to, anybody who -- Most of the guys who fish with cast nets and stuff, they're all state waters, and so they all eliminated their permits, because they didn't want to fool with having to fill out the paperwork and all that stuff, and so they don't even have that permit, the federal permits, and so it would almost have to come from the state, or work hand-in-hand with the state, to be able to get an observer program for the other portions of the fishery. Like I said, all the observer coverage is all for the gillnet fishery.

MR. LAKS: Rusty.

MR. HUDSON: The year-one and year-two class, of both Spanish and king, there has been an interaction at the midpoint of the east coast of North Carolina of those animals being almost unidentifiable at a certain point, as far as the catch rate, and I think that it's important to understand the interaction, the intermixing, of that size class in that first year or two, because, of course, that's when they evolve to being the breeding season, and so I just think that there's some issues here on how to measure both of those populations when there's interactions with the gillnet and other fisheries that depend on that up there in North Carolina. Thank you.

MR. LAKS: Chip.

DR. COLLIER: Thank you for all those comments, and I've written all those down, and I think we had overlooked a couple of those, and thank you so much for mentioning the NEAMAP surveys, and I think those would be a good addition to get included in there, as well as improved recreational numbers for both Spanish and king mackerel, and then Rusty's last comment of really trying to make sure that the fish are identified properly in some of these areas where there's overlap, and so we'll look into that.

Then, back to Thomas's question about how long it takes for an independent survey, a fishery-independent survey, to really get incorporated into the management process, it can vary, and some of the age data could be incorporated very early on, if it's an age-limited or a data-limited species. However, for Spanish mackerel, and king mackerel, there's a lot of data for that, but it could be used to inform maybe Rusty's question, where he was saying the overlap between age-one and two, and so it could be used to answer some of those questions like that.

The other area where it's going to be most informative is looking at trends in abundance, and, quite often, that takes over five years for that to be ready. You need to have at least three years, to be looking at really a trend, and so five years is where it's starting to look to make sure that people are comfortable with the data coming out of a survey, and, in all likelihood, it's going to take up to ten years for something like that to get truly incorporated into a stock assessment and really provide some long-term guidance on how the population is responding to ups and downs, and so thank you, all, for the comments. If you have any additional items that you think need to be incorporated, please don't hesitate to email Christina, or myself, and this was great to hear your comments. Thank you so much.

MR. LAKS: Thank you, Chip. Is there anyone else that wants to raise their hand? If not, we will move on, unless there's anything else, Christina.

MS. WIEGAND: No, and, like Chip said, I really appreciate you guys, you know, going through the mackerel components of that document and that providing your input, and I think we've got some really great additions to add now.

MR. LAKS: All right. Well, I guess next is space center operations. Steve, you had your hand raised?

MR. DONALSON: Yes. Sorry. I'm sure you already said this, Christina, but are we recording this session, by any chance?

MS. WIEGAND: Absolutely.

MR. DONALSON: Okay. Cool. I had some technical difficulties, and so I missed about twenty minutes, and I wanted to make sure that I can catch up. That's it, Ira. Sorry.

MS. WIEGAND: We record all of these meetings, and I am certainly happy to provide you a copy of this meeting, either in video form, or we'll also have someone type up a transcript of it as well, whichever you would prefer, Steve.

MR. DONALSON: Thank you.

MS. WIEGAND: All right, and so space center operation impacts. This is -- I don't have a formal presentation for this, but it is something that the council has asked for you guys to discuss, especially those of you who fish down in Florida, and so it's recently sort of come to the attention, I guess you could say to the council, that there's been a pretty big increase in space exploration activities off of Florida, in that there's sort of two main things that are often associated with that. There's some pretty large area closures during launches, as well as some marine debris that people have been noticing related to these space exploration efforts. The council was just hoping to get a little bit of feedback from you on how this sort of increase in space exploration has been impacting your fishing businesses, if at all, and so I will sort of turn it back to you, Ira, and anyone that fishes along the Florida coast that might be impacted by this.

MR. LAKS: Charlie and then Keith and then Tom Roller.

MR. LOCKE: I haven't fished down there in about six or seven years, but I used to go down there in the spring every year and hook-and-line king, and then we would gillnet Spanish out there on the shoals, and, just back then, we would get run out all the time by the helicopter, when there was a launch, and Steve English will know, and Tom Legere, and he was like one of the better gillnet fishermen down there, and he's actually looking at moving to North Carolina, because it's impacting him so much, and he's literally -- Between the Spanish being spread out, where the warm water is not bunching them up, and then all the launches, it's really -- It's killing him down there, from what he says, and I haven't fished there in --

Like I said, it's probably been eight years since I was back down there, but, you know, his description to me was like, you know, if you would chum up fish at the end of the dock, and then you were constantly lighting off firecrackers on top of it, or fireworks on top of it, they probably wouldn't be there very long, and so he actually felt like the fish weren't using the shoals like they used to as much, and so, you know, there's a lot of --

There's all these shoals that are outside the three-mile line, and that's where you catch your Spanish, because the water is shallow enough that your net can stay on the bottom, and it fishes more water column, and, in his mind, the fish are being run off of there. Now, I'm not down there to back that up, but I think it's a concern that the council probably needs to look at, whether it's impacting landings, or even just the fishermen in the area that maybe even need to look at being compensated for it, and I'm not sure where to go from that.

MR. LAKS: Keith, go ahead.

MR. BOWEN: I catch, you know, king mackerel, but there are some areas that are definitely affected for king fishing. I mean, you've got Chris that is right in the no-go zone, and then it's like they go to launch it, and then they stop, and they cancel it, and then it's the next day, and all along the fish are piled up in those areas, and so you're getting run out by, you know, Coast Guard helicopters, and sent fifteen miles, or ten miles, south, and I don't really know what kind of an answer that you could have, unless they just sent them off at nighttime, but I don't think that's something they would consider, just for some commercial fishermen, but it definitely does have an effect. I mean, you could be catching limits every day, and then, two or three days out of the week, and you've got nice weather, which hardly happens any more, and you might not be able to go, because there's a launch, and the whole entire area is covered, and so, anyway, that's just my observation on that.

MR. LAKS: Steve, go ahead.

MR. ENGLISH: I totally agree with Keith, and the problem is we're seeing more and more launches now, and they have reupped their launches, and they're getting a lot more launches now, and they had interaction with a cruise ship, and so they got real strict on a bunch of things too, and so they're getting more aggressive on running you out of the area, and the problem is that it costs you the whole day when they do it, and, you know, you get eighteen days of fishing, and they run you out nine of them, and, well, you've lost half your season, and so it's a pretty bad thing, and they really need to get a handle on something, or, like he said, they ought to be compensating the fishermen, if they've got to run them out, and that just should be part of the expense of the private launches and all, and that should be part of their expense.

MR. LAKS: Steve Donaldson.

MR. DONALSON: I will just throw it out there, just to have it in the minutes, or the notes, but would it ever make sense for them to try to coordinate, or to have, the SKA, at least, coordinate the dates around the launch times, the known launch times, because you're talking about potentially scrubbing an entire weekend of a tournament, where 400 to 800 boats have invested to be there, and it might be nice to put those groups together.

MR. LAKS: Tom.

MR. ROLLER: When I originally raised my hand, what I wanted to ask was that I was curious how these closures were impacting fishermen, and if we could hopefully get some feedback on how it was impacting people spatially, how it was adjusting their effort, and I just want to thank, particularly, Charlie and Steve, for their comments there, and I forgot who made comment between them, but it was an excellent, excellent comment, and I think that's really what the council is looking for.

Also, just for those who have been listening along to the council meetings, the marine debris term that's been used has been "space junk", and I was curious if there had been any interactions with space junk by any fishermen in that area, if anybody has heard of anything, other than the shrimp boats.

AP MEMBER: The mahi-mahi like them, when they're floating, the space junk.

MR. LAKS: Go ahead, Steve.

MR. ENGLISH: There is always -- There is just tons of debris out there on that bottom, and, yes, you will get a little more, but everybody -- The commercial guys, you know, you pretty much find where it's at, locate it, mark it, and then you work around it, and so the debris is not getting that much worse yet, but it's something that, you know, we're well aware of.

MR. LAKS: I know this is really out of the council's purview of what they can do with mission control, but I don't know if any of you want to suggest maybe making a motion that the council notifies space agencies that this is just not just an issue with shrimp nets, but it's costing, you know, the Spanish and king mackerel fleets hardship too, and that might be something we can do, and it doesn't even have to be a motion, but just a suggestion to look into it, or say that it is affecting not just the shrimp fishery, but it's also pretty seriously affecting not only commercial, but the potential for recreational fisheries to be affected, too.

MS. WIEGAND: I will certainly make sure that the conversation that was had today -- I'm not sure that we necessarily need a motion, and it seems like the AP is sort of pretty much in agreement over how this is impacting king and Spanish mackerel fishing businesses, both from a commercial standpoint and from a recreational standpoint, and so I will definitely make sure that all of that information is recorded and presented to the council, and, of course, both Tom and Spud are online listening to the comments that you all are providing.

MR. LAKS: Steve.

MR. ENGLISH: Christina said what needed to be said, and, yes, they definitely do need to acknowledge it, and they need to come up with something on it, and that would be great.

MR. LAKS: I wonder what would happen if one of those rockets hit a right whale.

MS. BROUWER: Ira, sorry to interrupt your meeting, and there is a couple of members of the public who have got their hands up, and I just wanted to let them know that there's going to be an opportunity, at the end of the meeting, to make public comment, and I think that would be the appropriate time for them to chime-in.

MS. WIEGAND: Thanks, Myra.

MR. LAKS: Do we have anything more for the space center operations? Christina, do you want to do the public comment now, especially if it seems to be concerned about the space center?

MS. WIEGAND: Yes, we can go ahead and do public comment now, and then jump into sort of our last agenda item, and that's perfectly fine.

MR. LAKS: Okay.

MS. WIEGAND: I will say, if you are a member of the public online, and you're interested in making public comment, go ahead and raise your hand, and we'll get you unmuted, so that you're able to speak.

MR. LAKS: Mr. Jim Busse, go ahead.

MR. BUSSE: Hi, Ira. How are you doing?

MR. LAKS: Hi, Jim.

MR. BUSSE: Christina, thank you, and Rusty, Charlie Locke, but, anyway, we're down here at ground-zero, right in the middle of the launches, and I want you to know that the federally-regulated fishery that you guys are trying to manage, and take care of, is being assaulted on a weekly basis now, and, if the launch program gets its way, they'll launch one or two a day, and so, if you've not seen a space operation's rocket launch advisory chart, before the launch, they put out an advisory, and they have areas that are marked off, latitude and longitude, and, whether you're recreational or commercial, you're not supposed to go in those zones.

Some of those zones is a \$250,000 fine, and no more than six years in jail, if you go in these zones, and so, whether you're a charter fisherman, or a tournament fisherman, or a commercial fisherman, you're screwed on all those days, and the space program is a lovely thing, and it's a wonderful thing, and it's growing in leaps and bounds here, but it's doing detrimental damage to a federally-managed fishery that you guys have control over, somewhat, and so you all need to get together with these people down here.

They are somewhat cooperative, and they listen to us, but then they go back about their business of creating more launches and more launches, and so, not only do they go out and pollute the Indian River, and the Banana River, and the Mosquito Lagoon, but they also go up and they dump a bunch of space junk on the Oculina Bank, doing massive harm to that, but everyone is so involved, and so tuned-in, on the spectacular launches, and the future of the space program, that, as the commercial and recreational sport fishing community, are being -- How do we call it? Let's say disregarded, and how's that for a fancy word?

Anyway, you all need to do something, and you all need to get involved. These are your fish, and we're being left out, and we have a resource to harvest, and we're not being able to do it, because of the space program, and you would be having the same conversation if you were up in New Jersey right now, with all these windmills being erected, and so we're being pushed out, and we're

just another head on the chopping block, and so I think you guys should pay strict attention to your local Spanish and king mackerel and other fisheries in our area, including shrimp, and pay attention and do something about it.

MR. LAKS: Thank you, Jim.

MR. BUSSE: You're welcome, Ira.

MR. LAKS: We'll go to Rusty and then Laurilee.

MR. HUDSON: Yay, Jim, and hopefully yay, Laurilee. Thank you so much for speaking. Amen.

MR. LAKS: Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: Was that it, Rusty? Okay. There's another aspect that we need to look at, or, well, two more. I mean, Jim mentioned the space junk falling in the Oculina reef, but the shrimpers are also catching it in their nets, and it's destroying their nets, and they're losing their catch, and Mike Merrifield will touch on that.

I'm going to talk about their impacts to the estuary itself. You have the Indian River Lagoon, and it is in deep trouble right now, as far as the water quality, and our seagrass is all gone, and we all know, and appreciate, the value of estuaries to the offshore fisheries, both commercial and recreational, and so what we're looking at is massive development, probably more development going on out there now than what happened in the 1960s, but the beginning of the end for the northern Indian River Lagoon happened in the 1960s, when the space center -- You know, they bought the land, and they ran the people that lived there off of Merritt Island, and they built the causeway, and they built a causeway across the Banana Creek, and so the northern Banana River Estuary and the Indian River Estuary used to be connected by Banana Creek.

There was -- You know, there was movement of water between the two estuaries, and there was -- You know, there was oysters, and there were so many oysters along the shoreline, in those little creeks and tributaries, that you couldn't pull a boat up to the shoreline. All the homeowners, they had docks to get out into the water, because you literally couldn't get across the oyster beds, and all of that is gone now. The great schools of mullet, all of the things that we used to have, it's all gone, and, over time -- One of the worst things that they did is they built these dikes around the saltmarsh, and over 95 percent of the natural saltmarshes of the Indian River Lagoon were diked in the 1960s, to cut them off from the saltwater and turn them into freshwater lakes, so that they could use them for mosquito control.

Well, they put culverts underneath the dikes, and so they reconnected the impoundments back to the Indian River Lagoon, and, over time, those freshwater lakes transitioned back into healthy saltmarsh, and so these impounds that were created in the 1960s are now major nurseries for fish species, as well as seagrass, and they're full of ruppia seagrass, and the seeds flow out into the lagoon through the culverts.

The developers that are -- The contractors that are developing out at the space center, they're applying for permits from DEP to discharge stormwater and treated industrial wastewater into the impoundments of the Merritt Island Wildlife Refuge, which will ultimately affect the Indian River

Lagoon, and we're talking about millions, or possibly billions, of gallons of new freshwater every year going into these very important nursery areas inside the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge.

If we're ever going to get clams to come back, our filter feeders to come back, and our seagrass to come back, and we've already got so much freshwater coming into the lagoon from the west side, from all the new houses that are being built, because of the development at the space center, and so, between all of this new development, and all of this new freshwater going into these closed systems -- The northern Indian River Lagoon has a year-and-a-half residency time, and the northern Banana River has a two-and-a-half-year residency time, and so, if they start putting all this new fresh water into these basically closed estuaries, it's going to be catastrophic towards recovering our seagrass and recovering our fisheries. Thank you.

MR. LAKS: Thank you, Laurilee. I am going to go to Mike, and then we'll go back to the panel, but we'll let Mike go.

MS. WIEGAND: Mike, it shows that you're unmuted, but we can't hear you. Ira, what I suggest is that we sort of go back to Thomas and Rusty, and then we can circle back to Mike. We can try to troubleshoot with him, so that we can hear him.

MR. LAKS: That sounds good. Thomas and then Rusty.

MR. NEWMAN: I have been listening to this conversation at the council for some time now, and I've dealt with some of this stuff up off of Chincoteague, where they also launch a few rockets, and you really can't get a picture of how much effect this is having unless you see some of these closure maps, and we look at it in more detail, to see how many days a week they're doing it right now, and then how many days a week -- I know they're proposing to have launches every day, but I would like to see a more formal -- Something more formal put together, so we can actually see how much impact this is having, because everybody that doesn't fish in those areas can't really fathom what's going on, and that's also the first time that I've heard too about the rockets going over the top of the shoals and possibly scaring the fish off of those areas, and somebody needs to jump on that and start monitoring these areas and seeing if they do leave that shoal for, you know, forty-eight hours or something after each rocket launch, but I would like to continue discussion on this, and get a little bit more detailed presentation, with maybe some of these closure maps that NASA puts out.

MR. LAKS: Rusty.

MR. HUDSON: This is some old history, but, back at the cape, that inlet wasn't even created until the early 1950s, and then, with Ponce Inlet, with regard to the natural Mosquito Inlet, as it was called historically, it would up becoming shape-shifting. Starting in the early 1960s, and into the 1970s, and then it really affected things, to the point where you can read this one document from about 1900 or so, but it seemed that the oysters were the second-best bed of oysters on the entire U.S. east coast, out of Ponce Inlet, and it's now dead, and so it begs to wonder how do you want to manage what naturally existed. Thank you.

MR. LAKS: Did we get Mike figured out? I would add to this, real quick, also, that I don't know what their weather calculations are of when they scrub a launch, but I don't think they do it on

forty-knot days, and so it's affecting calm days, and that kind of doubles the insult. Mike. Christina, do we want to move on and see if we can get Mike to jump back in later?

MS. WIEGAND: Sure. Let's move on down the agenda, and we've just got one last item, and I will say, Mike, if we can't get you unmuted, and be able to hear you, you can always type your comments into that little chat box, and we can read it out, or, of course, there's an online form associated with this meeting, where you can provide public comment, but, after we sort of run through our very last agenda item, we'll swing back by and see if we can get you.

MR. LAKS: Okay, and so we're going to move into the election of a vice chair. Is there anyone that would like to make a nomination?

MR. DONALSON: Who were the past vice chairs?

MR. LAKS: I think our last vice chair was Steve Swann, wasn't it, Christina?

MS. WIEGAND: So it was Steve Swann for a while, and your most recent vice chair, and the reason we need to elect a new vice chair, is because Tom Roller was the most recent vice chair of the Mackerel Cobia AP, and so, now that he is serving as a council member, we do need a new vice chair.

MR. DONALSON: **Can I nominate myself?**

MS. WIEGAND: You can certainly volunteer and see if anyone wants to make a motion to that effect.

MR. LAKS: Is there a second for Steve Donalson?

MR. JONES: I will second that.

MR. LAKS: Okay. **All those in favor, raise your hand.**

MS. WIEGAND: I will give it a second for people to get their hands up.

MR. ENGLISH: I can't raise my hand, Ira, and I wanted to nominate somebody.

MR. LAKS: Did you hear Steve English, Christina?

MS. WIEGAND: I did, and so we've got, you know, the motion that Steve Donalson made, and Will seconded on the board.

MR. LAKS: We vote on this first, right?

MS. WIEGAND: We have to vote on this first, or someone can propose a substitute motion.

AP MEMBER: I will propose a substitute motion, if that's what means to -- If somebody wanted to nominate somebody and didn't get a chance to, and so, if that's the right thing to do, I will make that motion.

MS. WIEGAND: Your other option could be to -- I am trying to think of the easiest way to do this now.

MR. LAKS: Withdraw the motion?

MS. WIEGAND: Steve Donalson was the maker of the motion. Well, it's been seconded, and so it belongs -- I am trying to remember my Roberts Rules off the top of my head. It's been seconded now, and so it belongs to the committee, and so it can't be withdrawn. Myra, if I'm wrong about this, please correct me, and so we would have to vote on it, or somebody can propose a substitute motion, and so I would say, Steve English, if you were interested in nominating someone, and didn't get to, you do have the option to propose a substitute motion here, before we vote on this motion.

MR. ENGLISH: Okay. I can clear this up real easy. I am perfectly content with Steve Donalson, and I was going to nominate Thomas Newman, and I see that he voted for Steve Donalson, and so I'm happy.

MS. WIEGAND: As long as everyone is happy.

MR. LAKS: I think that's seven in favor. Any opposed.

MS. WIEGAND: I would say the easiest way to do this is, if you're opposed, maybe just unmute and note that you're opposed.

MR. LAKS: **I don't hear anyone opposed. Any abstentions?** Congratulations.

MR. DONALSON: Thank you, thank you. Ira, can we circle back later and talk about this, offline?

MR. LAKS: Sure.

MS. WIEGAND: Before we go to Other Business, Ira, did you want to try to go back to Mike and see if we can get him unmuted for his public comment?

MR. LAKS: Yes, and I see that Laurilee has -- She might have talked to him, and so we can try Mike first, and then maybe let Laurilee -- Maybe she's going to convey what he had to say.

MR. MERRIFIELD: Can you hear me now?

MR. LAKS: Got you.

MR. MERRIFIELD: Perfect. Sorry about that. Basically, I just wanted to talk about the closed areas, the RNAs, they call them, and they're based on the trajectories, and so they change, but they typically go a good ways out, but they don't go in either a straight easterly, northeasterly, or southerly type direction, and so, basically, you have to be tuned into these things all the time, because they change all the time, and they don't always -- When a launch scrubs, they don't always let you know right away, and the launch windows can be anywhere from a hour to a couple hours

long, two to three hours long, and so there's a pretty good-sized impact on anybody that's either gone out fishing and can't get back, and we've had that happen before, where fishermen can't get back into port, because they're stuck on the other side of the closed area.

I mean, there are some safety issues there as well, and so, you know communication of these closed areas is key, and then you've got the impact of unfishable areas, or you're stuck way offshore, and you can't continue fishing, and so it's a lot of impact to the fishermen.

The other thing that we talked about was debris, and there is some debris that's left over from old launches, and there's new launch debris, and the stuff kind of rolls around on the bottom, and so it doesn't always stay in the same place, and, with some of the new programs that are coming online, out of the space center, they're not going to be recovering, or bringing back, some of the boosters and things like that, and so there's just going to be some -- There's going to be more debris out there, and so it's just something that --

Also, they've talked about, when they're bringing some of these things back in, there might be some unspent fuel, some hydrazine, some toxic oils, things like that, and I just really think, from a fisheries standpoint, there needs to be some quantification of what it is, how much is being put out there, and what are the levels of toxic materials that are being released out there on each launch, so we can just get a handle on -- You know, as a single launch, most of the Environmental Protection Agency reviews have said that the effect is negligible, but, when you start piling these things on here, is it really negligible, or are we going to start seeing some impacts from some of these toxic chemicals, or debris that is being pushed out there, and that's about all I had really to add to that conversation.

MR. LAKS: Thank you, Mike. We have time to let Laurilee chime back in, don't we?

MS. WIEGAND: Absolutely.

MR. LAKS: Go ahead, Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: Okay, and I really appreciate you guys bringing this up to the different committees, because it's really important, and I really appreciate it, and I actually had my hand up in case Mike couldn't get back on, but I just wanted to take this opportunity to thank you, to thank NOAA and National Marine Fisheries Service, you know, for getting involved and at least asking questions.

There is going to be a presentation by Dale Ketcham, and he is the Government Affairs Coordinator for Space Florida, and he will be making a presentation at the June council meeting, and so you guys tune-in, so you can listen to it, so you can hear Space Florida's side of it. We would like to see some kind of provision that would exempt, you know, people that want to sign into a program where they would be exempted, you know, from suing the government if they're out fishing, or coming across that area, and a piece of rocket falls on them. They are going to probably be dead anyway, but their family might sue.

Anyway, we're hoping for some kind of relief like that, where we can opt-out of the ability to sue the federal government if a rocket part does fall on a fishing boat, so that we can continue to fish and traverse those areas. The chance of a rocket part falling on a fishing boat are much smaller

than a rocket part falling on a cruise ship, and we don't have 6,000 passengers on our fishing boats, and so maybe there's a possibility that they could consider that, and I think that's what we need to push for.

As far as the garbage that's on the bottom out here, we didn't put that there, and they did, and I think that, if they can initiate a program where they could, you know, maybe pay a shrimper for bringing that garbage back to the shore, rather than throwing it back in the water, that might give them incentive, and it would certainly be cheaper for the federal government to have a reward for the shrimpers that bring in the space junk, and it would be a lot cheaper than having to send a salvage company out to try to locate the stuff and get it off the bottom, but I do have a concern about, if it's falling in the rock shrimp grounds, and the rock shrimpers are catching it, then it's falling into the *Oculina* reef, too. Thank you, and thanks again for you all's support. I really appreciate it.

MR. LAKS: Thank you, Laurilee. All right. Rusty, you had your hand raised? I'm sorry.

MR. HUDSON: Thank you. I have to agree with both Mike and Laurilee, and they are bringing up actually awesome concerns that needs to be addressed, and it's not in the realm of being addressed right now, except on this level, and so thank you.

MR. LAKS: All right. Well, I guess we're heading into Other Business. Is there anyone that has any other business to be brought forward? Tony B., go ahead.

MR. BENEVENTO: You mentioned, at the outset, that the kingfish tournaments would no longer be able to sell their kingfish, and what is that all about, and is there -- It doesn't seem -- You know, that's such a small little thing.

MS. WIEGAND: I'm sorry. Let me go ahead and clarify, Tony, and that's certainly not the case. Right now, it's written into the regulations that properly-permitted king and Spanish mackerel tournaments -- Those fish can be donated to a dealer, who then sells that fish and donates that money to charity. There is no discussion currently going on at the council table to change that. However, the council has simply asked for the Science Center to work with the states to provide more information on how those landings are tracked and sort of an estimate of those landings over the last ten years, but there currently hasn't been any discussion about removing that provision.

MR. LAKS: If I'm correct, we'll probably talk about that more in the future, Christina?

MS. WIEGAND: Absolutely. Once the council has gotten information from the Science Center, I imagine they will want this advisory panel to talk about it as well, and we're just sort of waiting to get additional information, so that, you know, we have that in front of us when having these discussions.

MR. LAKS: Anyone else? If I could take just a few minutes, and I know I've talked to you about it, Christina, and I just want to bring it to your attention, guys, that the Marine Resource Education Program -- It's a great thing, if you're fisherman, to learn about some of these processes. If you're an advisory panel member, it will clarify a lot of these things, and make some things a lot clearer to you, and this is program that I've been a part of, and I just find it to be a really great program, and I would encourage you to look at this, and, if you're interested in attending, to please give a

call, or Dylan a call, and, this year, we're having an unusual workshop, where we're doing it all in one week, and we usually break it up in two weeks, and we're trying to accommodate fishermen, in the Southeast particularly, with this timeframe, where it's not the busiest time of year.

All your expenses would be covered, except for alcohol, but all your food and drink and travel expenses are covered, and it's a great program to let you find out about the science, and how the science relates to the management, and you get to meet some of these people who are involved in all of it, and it really helped me clarify a lot of things, and so I encourage you to look into it, and, if you're interested, to let me know. With that said, does anyone have anything else? Thomas.

MR. NEWMAN: I would just back up, Ira, on the MREP stuff, and I just got done attending the February meeting, and it's very helpful. You get to meet a lot of the key players in the science part of it, and the management part of it, and there's no pressure, and it's not like these meetings where you've got to vote on something, or you've got something contentious going on, and it's a lot more relaxed atmosphere, and you can have more intimate conversations, versus just having to raise your hand and getting answers and emailing back and forth, and it's a good, relaxed environment. You also get involved and see what the people on like the Gulf Council are kind of experiencing, and it's all around, and it's a good -- It's tiring, and it's ten or twelve hours a day, but it's a good feeling when you get done.

Also, for new business, we keep discussing MRIP, and the MRIP numbers, and I just got an email from them a few days ago, and I have listened to a couple of the webinars on MRIP a few months ago, but I know they're doing cumulative estimates now, instead of doing wave estimates, and they also are looking at get rid of PSEs above 50, and I was wondering maybe if, in the future, we could get a presentation from some of the MRIP folks.

My email, I think, came from Katherine Papacostas, and I think she's presented stuff at the MREP program, and she also presented stuff at the Mid-Atlantic Council, earlier this month, and that might be useful for some of our members, to have her, or somebody else from the MRIP staff, and this is the Marine Resource Information Program, to come and talk and maybe answer some questions for everybody.

MR. LAKS: Thank you, Thomas. Rusty.

MR. HUDSON: The MRIP and MREP, and I agree. It's definitely a useful situation, and it's the type of thing that people should be involved in from all sectors, and so I just wanted to throw that out there. Thank you.

MR. LAKS: Again, if anyone has any questions, I encourage you to give me a call. Is there any other business?

MS. WIEGAND: I don't see any hands up, Ira, but I did just want to take a quick moment to thank you all for attending a webinar meeting, and taking time out of your day to discuss these issues. I know that it's a big ask for you to spend a chunk of time doing this, but it is incredibly valuable information for the council to have, and I don't usually speak for the council, but I'm pretty sure that I speak for them in saying that we really appreciate you guys taking the time, and I just wanted to say that I'm looking forward to seeing you all in-person later this summer, and you'll be hearing from me in the next few days about dates for that meeting.

MR. LAKS: Again, thank you, all. Thank you very much, and I guess that concludes the Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel. Thank you again.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on April 21, 2023.)

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Certified By: _____ Date: _____

Transcribed By
Amanda Thomas
June 15, 2023

The Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened via webinar on January 18, 2023, and was called to order by Chairman Ira Laks.

MS. WIEGAND: All right, Ira. Well, I've got 1:00 p.m. on the dot, and there are still a couple of people that mentioned to me that they were going to be here that haven't hopped on yet, but we do have, you know, quite a lengthy agenda for just a short webinar meeting, and so, if you're good to go, I think I'm also ready to get started.

MR. LAKS: That sounds good to me. All right, well, we are going to begin the Mackerel Cobia AP meeting, here on the 21st of April, 2023. We need to get an approval of the agenda. Is there anyone in opposition of the agenda? Seeing no hands, and no objection, I think we will move on with the approval of the agenda then.

The next thing would be Approval of the October 2022 Meeting Minutes. Is there anyone who has any adjustments or anything they would like to bring up about the meeting minutes from 2022, in October? Then we have approval of the minutes, with no hands.

MS. WIEGAND: Ira, before we jump into Tom's report, I think it maybe it might help if I give everyone another quick reminder of how to work the webinar, since it's been a while since we've had one of these meetings, if that's okay.

MR. LAKS: Yes, and do we want to do a quick introduction too?

MS. WIEGAND: Yes, I think that would be helpful, and I can certainly go and call names down the list, so that everyone can get a moment to introduce themselves.

MR. LAKS: Okay. I will turn it over to you.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Well, first just a friendly reminder on how you work the webinar. You've got this little microphone button here. If it is orange, you are muted, and, if it's green, your mic is live, and everyone can hear you. I just ask that, when you're not actively speaking on the webinar, that you go ahead and mute yourself, to lower down on background noise.

This little turkey-looking thing is the hand-raise button. That's how you're going to indicate that you would like to add something to the conversation. Myra, behind the scenes, will then add your name to this hand-raise list on the side, so you'll be able to sort of see where you are in the queue. If that little button is red, if it's got a red arrow, that means your hand is raised, and then, finally, if you've got any sort of technical issues, Julia Byrd is also helping out behind the scenes, and you can type a question in here for staff, and then we'll be able to sort of help you troubleshoot whatever the problem may be.

With that, I think I'm going to run us through introductions, real fast. Most of you all know me. I'm Christina Wiegand, and I'm the Fisheries Social Scientist here with the South Atlantic Council, and I am the FMP lead for Mackerel Cobia, and the one that is constantly bombarding you with emails, and so, you just going down my list, let's start with you, Spud, and then Tom.

MR. WOODWARD: Thanks, Christina. Good afternoon, everybody. I'm Spud Woodward, and I'm a council at-large member from Georgia, and I live in Brunswick, and I am currently vice chair of the Mackerel Cobia Committee.

MR. ROLLER: Hi, everybody. My name is Tom Roller, and I'm the at-large North Carolina council member and current chair of the council's Mackerel Committee. I'm a full-time for-hire operator, and I live in Beaufort, North Carolina. Also, I'm a former Mackerel AP member.

MS. WIEGAND: Aaron Kelly, you're next on my list, if you want to introduce yourself.

MR. KELLY: I'm Aaron Kelly, and I run the Charter Boat Rock Solid out of Oregon Inlet Fishing Center, and we also have two other for-hire boats, and I work under my fishing name, and we've been doing it for about twenty-five years.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Charlie Locke, you're next.

MR. LOCKE: I'm Charlie Locke, and I live in Wanchese, North Carolina. I've been full-time commercial fishing for almost thirty years, mainly gillnet, but we do a lot of hook-and-line snapper grouper fishing, and I just do a little bit of everything. Thanks.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Next, I've got our esteemed chair, Ira Laks.

MR. LAKS: My name is Ira Laks, and I've been in the charter and commercial fisheries for over thirty-five years, and I am from Jupiter, Florida.

MS. WIEGAND: Keith Bowen, you're next.

MR. BOWEN: This is Keith Bowen. I'm a commercial king mackerel fisherman from Sebastian, Florida.

MS. WIEGAND: Rusty Hudson.

MR. HUDSON: I'm Rusty Hudson, and I've been running Directed Sustainable Fisheries for many years, and I've been involved in charter, headboat, and commercial fishing since the early 1960s, and I've been real happy to be able to help in a lot of ways. Thank you.

MS. WIEGAND: Steve Donaldson.

MR. DONALSON: Good afternoon, everybody. Steve Donaldson from St. Augustine, Florida, a recreational fisherman, a one-time Pro Kingfish Tour member, with the SKA, and I also, as background, have degrees in marine science biology and marine science business, and I'm on the Mackerel Cobia Panel, and this is I think my third term, or maybe my fourth term, but, anyway, I'm here to help, and I'm looking forward to what we're going to learn today.

MS. WIEGAND: Steve English.

MR. ENGLISH: I'm Steve English, and I'm from Port Salerno, Florida. I've been commercial fishing for over forty years, pushing fifty, and I have fished Florida through North Carolina, and I'm a member of the AP, and I'm trying to work on Spanish mackerel.

MS. WIEGAND: Thomas Newman.

MR. NEWMAN: I'm Thomas Newman, and I commercial fish out of North Carolina, and I also work part-time at the North Carolina Fisheries Association. I've been a commercial fisherman since before I had memories, and I grew up in the family, and that's it.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Tony Benevento.

MR. BENEVENTO: Tony Benevento, Jacksonville, Florida. I grew up in Fort Lauderdale, and I've been fishing since I was nine, and so that puts me at about sixty years of recreational fishing.

MS. WIEGAND: Last, but not least, Will Jones.

MR. JONES: Hi, everybody. I'm Will Jones from Bounty Hunter Guide Service, and I'm a full-time fishing guide from Morehead City, North Carolina. This is my second meeting, and my first meeting was the meeting in October in Charleston, and that was fun, and I appreciate everybody, and I'm looking forward to it.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Then, next, I think we've got Will Palmer, who just hopped on. Will, if you want to try to unmute and do a quick soundcheck and maybe introduce yourself to the group. Will, we just sent you an audio pin, and it looks like you're bouncing back and forth. I think we're going to go ahead and get started, but, if you continue to have audio issues, you can type into that chat box. Maybe we've got you now. Let's see. Will, can you hear us, Will Palmer? It looks like you're muted on your end, Will. If you hit that microphone button, once it turns green, you're unmuted, and we'll be able to hear you. Julia, I might ask you to shoot him a quick message and see if we can get him online, while we get rolling down the agenda.

MS. BYRD: Will do.

MR. PALMER: Can you hear me?

MS. WIEGAND: There we go. Perfect. We can hear you loud and clear. Do you want to just introduce yourself, real fast?

MR. PALMER: My name is Bill Palmer, and my official name is William Palmer, but I live in the Jacksonville, Florida area, and I'm seventy-three years old, or seventy-two years old, excuse me, and I will be seventy-three at the end of the year, and I'm an avid fisherman, and I'm just enjoying being a part of all of this.

MS. WIEGAND: Excellent. Thank you all so much for taking the time to introduce yourselves, and, with that, I will turn it back over to you, Ira, to run us through this agenda.

MR. LAKS: First off, I would like to thank everyone for hopping on here. I appreciate you all taking the time, and I look forward to hearing what you have to say. I think we're going to go now

to a report from Tom Roller, who is the council's Mackerel Cobia Committee chair, and so I'm going to hand it over to you, Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. My report is going to be really brief, because I think we're going to go over a lot of the material today, but, first of all, I just want to thank all the advisors for being here. This is really important, what you do, and sacrificing your time, and I just did receive a text message from one of you, saying you left a really good bite to be here, and so we sincerely appreciate that.

Just as a reminder, you know, king and Spanish mackerel, in particular, are some of the most important recreational and commercial fisheries that the council manages, and, you know, as far as commercial, they're first and third in ex-vessel values, and they're number one and two in landed pounds, and, for recreational, both species are two and three in directed trips, following only dolphin, and so just a reminder of how important this fishery is.

On my report, what I'm going to do is just touch base on what we went through at the last council meeting, and I know that some of you tuned-in and listened to that, and the first thing was we -- The majority of the conversation was about the stock assessment and us expressing our frustration with just the debate between the Science Center and the SSC and them not being able to reconcile the stock assessment, and I know we're going to go into that a little bit more today.

The big part of the discussion though was port meetings, and I know this has been very important to the advisory panel for a long period of time, dating back to when I was an advisory panel member, and we're going to go forward with port meetings across the South Atlantic. The council -- We debated this at-length, and what we're trying to do is encompass the entire region of this fish, including the Gulf of Mexico, and going from Florida all the way to the southern shore of Massachusetts, partnering with the other councils, as well as the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission.

I was the liaison to the Gulf Council meeting, a couple of weeks ago, and I had a lot of conversations, regarding the port meetings, with the Gulf Council members, as well as their staff and other stakeholders there, and there's some really interesting things going on with the fishery, and so I really hope that the Gulf will be part of this discussion as well.

The third piece, and I'm sure some of you all heard this, was that we had a lengthy discussion regarding the sale of recreationally-landed -- It's kind of a hard thing to say, but the sale of tournament landings from recreational tournaments and how they're counted against the commercial quota. We had a really lengthy discussion on that, and I know there was some discussion here, and hopefully it will be brought up here at the meeting today, if we have time, but, realistically, looking forward, we have to kind of see the numbers, and what they look like, as part of the quota, before we can really continue that discussion, and that's all I have for you guys.

MR. LAKS: Thank you, Tom. Christina, I guess I'm going to turn it over to you to get an update on the recently-submitted amendments.

MS. WIEGAND: Thanks, Ira, and so this is going to be a pretty brief update, because we don't have that many amendments going through the process right now for CMP, and so, if you guys will remember Amendment 34, and this was the king mackerel assessment amendment, and it

responded to the SEDAR 38 update, and it found that king mackerel are neither overfished nor undergoing overfishing, and, in fact, due to a number of years of really strong recruitment, the catch levels were able to be raised quite a bit through this amendment, and this is also the amendment that was going to adjust sector allocations, up the recreational bag limit off the east coast of Florida to three fish per person, to match the rest of the Gulf and Atlantic coast, and adjust the requirement to land fish with heads and fins intact, so that recreational fishermen could sort of match with commercial fishermen and be able to land king and Spanish mackerel that had been bitten by sharks, or barracuda, as long as the part of the fish that was left met the minimum size limit.

The council approved that amendment back in March of last year, and it's been submitted. The proposed rule published earlier this year, with comments due at the end of March, and the final rule should be publishing for that any day now.

The only other amendment that was underway at the time was Amendment 33, and this was the Gulf's response to the king mackerel assessment, and, if you guys will remember, at your meeting in October, we talked a little bit about the sector allocation adjustments that they were considering in that amendment. However, ultimately, they decided to stop work on this amendment, and so it won't be moving forward at this time, and so those are the only two mackerel amendments that I've got to update you on.

You do have the full document in your briefing book, and this covers all amendments that are going through the council process right now, and so, in the future, you're looking through it, and you have questions about amendments that are not mackerel-related, feel free to reach out, and I can always put you in contact with whoever is in charge of those amendments, and so that's all. If there are any questions about either of these two amendments, I am happy to answer them.

MR. LAKS: I don't see any questions, and so I believe we're going to move on to Citizen Science, and Julia and Meg are going to give an update of what's going in the citizen science world.

MS. BYRD: Hi, everyone. For those of you who I haven't had an opportunity to meet yet, my name is Julia Byrd, and I work with Meg Withers on our Citizen Science Program, and so, today, I just wanted to kind of update you guys on a few things that have happened since you met last fall and then tell you about two kind of upcoming projects that we have that we're hoping to get some input from you guys on, and so hopefully some assistance from you guys on.

First off, I just wanted to update you guys on a couple of things. We have been working with some of our colleagues at NOAA to put together a special issue of a magazine called *Fisheries*, and it's an issue on citizen science, and so that special issue came out in November, and there's an article in it on our FISHstory project, that I'll be talking about a little bit later, and so, in your briefing book, in the presentation slides, there's a link that special issue, if you're interested in checking it out, and then I also just wanted to let you all know that, if you want to dig more into what's kind of going on in our citizen science program, we recently did a seminar presentation, through NOAA's central library, and so there's a link to that webinar recording, if you guys are interested in learning more about the projects we have going on and some of the results from those projects that we've gathered so far.

The real things that we wanted to chat with you about today, and get some input from you guys on, are kind of two initiatives that we're hoping to get underway in the upcoming months, and so the first one is related to our FISHstory project, and so I know there are a few, I think, new kind of Mackerel AP members on, and so this is a project where we're using kind of old, historic fishing photos to help us better understand kind of what was being caught, kind of the 1940s, 1950s, 1960s, and early 1970s, and kind of the size of fish that were being caught back then.

Last fall, I was able to give you guys an update on some findings from our pilot project, and so a couple of things have happened since the meeting last fall. One of the things that we're really excited about is that we submitted a grant proposal, and it is successfully going to get some funding to help us move our FISHstory project from kind of a pilot to a full-scale project, and one of the first things that we really need to do, in order to kind of expand the project, is to gather more kind of historic fishing photos from around the South Atlantic region, and we were really lucky to be able to partner with Rusty, who sits at the table with you guys on this initial pilot project, and he provided a ton of photos that we use in our pilot project, and he's actually been wonderful about reaching out to other kind of fishermen in his area, to gather more photos, but, to kind of take this project to the next level, we need to get photos from kind of each of the areas around our region.

The thing that we're trying to do is we're going to host kind of FISHstory scanning events, kind of later on throughout this year, and the goal of these events is we're going to try to kind of encourage people to come to these events to help us gather historic fishing photos from across the region, from kind of the 1940s to 1980s, that we can use in this FISHstory project, and so we're hoping to host these events in collaboration with some of the upcoming council and advisory panel meetings, and of note for you guys is that we're hoping to host one of these scanning events when you guys have your in-person Mackerel meeting, a bit later this summer here in Charleston.

Just to give an overview of what we want to happen at these kind of scanning events is we're going to invite people to bring kind of hard-copy photos, or digital photos, from kind of historic -- From the historic fisheries, or historic dock photos from their areas. If they're hard copies, we're going to scan those in. If they're digital photos, we'll just save those, and we'll collect some information on the photos, things like kind of where the photo was from, do we have a year that the photo was from, and then, if people are bringing hard-copy photos, we want to make sure to also be able to provide them with the digital copies of the photos as well, so that they'll not only have the hard copies, but they will also have digital copies, moving forward.

The kind of photos that we're looking for to analyze in the FISHstory project are really kind of these photos that are taken at the end of a fishing trip, where kind of the harvested catch is kind of displayed, and the anglers who went on that trip are kind of in the photo with that harvested catch. We're really interested in getting a year that the photo was taken, because that will help us use it in the analyses, and having some general information on the photo's location, at least kind of state-level information.

Then we're also hoping to gather information on the photo provider, just contact information for them, really so we can keep them in the loop on what is happening with the FISHstory project and make sure they know how their photos are being used, and so that's kind of the level of information we need, but, even better than that, is if we have photos where the fish are kind of being displayed hanging on a leaderboard. That allows us to get some length estimates of the fish. If we have more specific information on when the photo was taken, and things like month can be really useful,

or more specific location information, if we know the city that the photo was taken in, or the dock that it was taken in, and it's even better if we can get details like the vessel name and the captain's name of these photos.

The next thing that I wanted to do is walk you through a few kind of example photos that are really helpful and useful for the project, and the first one I'm going to show is one that Rusty provided, and this is kind of the gold standard, so to speak, of photos that we can analyze in FISHstory, and so this is kind of displaying kind of the harvested catch at the end of a trip, and we have the anglers who caught it in the photo with the fish. The fish are hanging on a leaderboard, which allows us to get kind of estimated size, and we know the date this photo was taken, the month, the day, and the year, and we know the location and the dock, or inlet, that it was caught off of, as well as kind of the vessel and captain name, and so Rusty provided a ton of these kind of wonderful photos for analysis, and so these are kind of the gold standard.

However, also really useful are kind of some other photos that other fishermen, or museums, have helped us gather thus far, and so this is another awesome photo that's great for the FISHstory analysis, and this one was taken in the Outer Banks, and, again, the fish are displayed on a leaderboard, and we know the year of the photo, and we don't know the month, but that's okay, and it's still a really useful photo. We know kind of where it was taken, where the fish were landed, and so another example of an awesome photo for our FISHstory project.

Just one more, and this one is from a little bit more recent, and this was provided by one of our Snapper Grouper AP members, and he was a long-time fisherman in Atlantic Beach. Again, the fish are hanging on the leaderboard, allowing us to get lengths, and we can have information on the year, the city, the dock, the state, and kind of the vessel information and captain information as well.

Other photos that can be really useful to our project are photos where kind of the fish are displayed, and they're not necessarily hanging on a leaderboard, but they're displayed on a dock, and kind of laid out, and this is a great example of a photo that was provided by Judy Helmey, who is a council member and captain out of Savannah, Georgia. The fish aren't hanging on a leaderboard, and so we can't -- It's harder for us to get length of fish from these photos, but you can see what was caught and get catch composition and catch rates.

Then just a few more example photos, and this is another one, which is a great one, from the Outer Banks region. Again, things aren't hanging on a leaderboard, and so it's harder to get size, but we're able to see kind of all of the fish in the photo, and most of them are shown enough where we're able to get an identification. Then the last example that I wanted to show you is another one that Judy provided, and I think there are a lot of photos like this out there as well, where kind of the fish are all displayed, but they're all -- Many of them are kind of in a pile, and so pictures like this can still be really valuable to the FISHstory project. However, it gets a little bit harder to be able to identify all of the fish within those photos.

I wanted to show you kind of all of these historic fishing photos as examples, because we're really interested in getting some information from you guys on whether you would be willing to bring photos, if we had a scanning event at your in-person Mackerel Cobia AP meeting later this year, and we wanted to take a pause, for a second, and see if there's kind of anyone here on the AP who might be willing to bring photos, or maybe you know folks within your kind of community who

may have photos that we could reach out to about some of these scanning events, and so I will pause here for a second, to see if anyone has any questions or if anyone might be willing to bring some photos to your in-person meeting coming up.

MS. WIEGAND: I see that Ira has got his hand up.

MR. LAKS: I will definitely bring some photos.

MS. BYRD: Awesome. Thanks, Ira.

MS. WIEGAND: Keith.

MR. BOWEN: I think that, between my dad and, we could scrounge up some photos to bring, too.

MS. BYRD: That's awesome. Thanks so much, Keith.

MS. WIEGAND: Tony.

MR. BENEVENTO: I believe that I can get you some real good photos from Mayport, back in the 1960s and 1970s, and, also, the Jacksonville Offshore Sportfishing Club has a whole gallery of them, but somebody has got to remind me to bring them, when our in-person meeting happens.

MS. BYRD: I will definitely be reaching out to you, and probably give you a call to remind you, and thanks so much, and thanks so much about mentioning the Jacksonville Offshore Sportfishing Club, too.

MS. WIEGAND: Bill Palmer.

MR. PALMER: I've got some friends here that have fished in Daytona and St. Augustine that I believe I can get some pictures from and bring them to the meeting, also.

MS. BYRD: That's awesome. Thanks so much, Bill, and all of you guys. I really appreciate it, and I will be happy to reach out to folks, to kind of remind you in advance of your in-person meeting, and, if anyone else on the line is able to dig up photos, just let me know, or let Christina know, and we would love to have them, and so thanks so much for so many of you guys being able to bring photos.

I guess one other question I have, before moving away from FISHstory, is I wondering -- I know Tony already mentioned the Jacksonville Offshore Sportfishing Club, but I was wondering if you guys knew of any other kind of opportunities to gather historic photos in your community. I know that Aaron has provided me with a couple of names, from the meeting that you all had last fall, and Alana Harrison, who is from the Outer Banks area, suggested that we go to the Outer Banks History Center, which is in Manteo, and they had a treasure trove. I mean, they had a huge archive of some of these historic fishing photos. If any of you guys know of other kind of folks within your community, or if you have museums, or kind of history centers, that might be good for us to reach out to, we would be all ears. Thomas, I see your question, to remind you to check with Ernie Foster from the Albatross Fleet, and so I will definitely do that. Thank you. Steve Donalson.

MR. DONALSON: I've got a couple of different clubs here in our area, and I can email you the contact information, but the Ancient City Gamefish Association is one, and then the Northeast Florida Marlin Association, and that's out of Camachee Marina. I can reach out to the presidents of those two clubs and ask them what their archives look like.

MS. BYRD: That would be awesome, Steve. Thanks so much.

MS. WIEGAND: I see that Ira has got his hand up.

MR. LAKS: I'm sure you've reached out to the West Palm Beach Fishing Club, but I actually have a question about FISHstory, and, you know, you mentioned that you're going to be looking more into, you know, better pictures with temporal information, but what about spatial, and is there a plan to sort of tie those two together, where you do have that complete information, especially in fish like, you know, Spanish and king mackerel, that are the probably forefront of range expansion, and is there any plans to maybe look at, in the recreational fishery especially, where these fish are expanding at different times, and see if there's a time shift, as to when they're being caught where? That would be interesting to find out, and I know you could track it through the commercial landings, with logbooks, but it might be a historical base for especially fish like that and mahi-mahi.

MS. BYRD: Ira, that's a great question, and so, as we're working to expand FISHstory, we're hoping to kind of not only expand its kind of temporal range, going through up into the 1980s, or maybe the early 1990s, but we're also looking to try to get that geographic coverage that we're talking about, and, right now, we're focusing most on kind of the South Atlantic states, but perhaps it would be good for us to reach out to places a little bit north of us, in Virginia and things like that, to get at some of the questions that you have, because that will give us an idea of kind of where these species were being caught in this kind of historic time period, and so we're working on that.

Then one other thing that I will note too is that we're kind of -- As we're working to expand the project, and we're really excited to get this new grant proposal, and there are going to be some folks from NC State, and some of the assessment folks from the Science Center, that are going to be working with us, and one of the things that they're really hoping to do is see if we can use these photos, once we get that kind of geographic, and kind of that spatial coverage, and temporal coverage, kind of over time, to see if kind of an index could be developed with these photos, because there's not a lot of information, particularly from the recreational fleets, before the mid to late 1970s, or early 1980s, and so we're going to be working with some folks to help us on some of those analytical things, once we're able to kind of grow the range of photos that we have. Does that answer your question, Ira?

MR. LAKS: Yes. Thank you. That would be very interesting to see, maybe along with fishing reports from papers and stuff too, as an added bonus.

MS. BYRD: Yes, and that's another good point too, Ira. I know that Rusty provided all these photos, but he also provided us with a lot of old newspaper articles and things like that, with kind of a captain-of-the-week, and so kind of getting some of that other information also helps kind of a complete the picture of what was being caught when, and that sort of thing, over time. I know some of those articles that Rusty provided were really wonderful, too.

All right, and so thank you, guys, for this FISHstory kind of information, and this was super helpful, and, if you think of any other people, or places, or museums or things, that might be helpful to reach out to, feel free to add them in the question window, or email Christina, or email me, and I will be getting in touch with many of you who noted that you might be able to bring photos in advance of the in-person meeting later this summer, just to kind of remind you, and so thank you so much.

Then there's one more project that I wanted to give you guys a quick update on, before kind of handing things back over to Ira and Christina, and so this is a project that we have been working with some outside researchers on, and I talked with you guys a little bit about it last fall as well, and so this is research that's really focused on trying to gather kind of baseline information about the knowledge, confidence in, and trust in using the citizen science process of collecting data to help inform fisheries management.

We are really interested in gathering this information from fishermen and scientists and managers in our region, with the idea that we would kind of ask these questions now, and then could ask them again in the future, to see if there are any changes about how kind of comfortable people are with using citizen science in a fisheries management context, kind of over time, and so the first stage of kind of this research is we were working with Rick Bonney, who is a Director Emeritus at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, and he has been our kind of citizen scientist, or one of our citizen science advisors, kind of our citizen science Yoda, or guru, who has been advising our program since its beginning.

What he did was he conducted interviews with a small group of fishermen, scientists, and managers, and they covered kind of these four main focus areas, the health of the fishery in the South Atlantic, whether or not there was sufficient data to support fisheries management, how familiar folks were with citizen science, and in particular the council's program, and then their overall support and faith in citizen science and in using citizen science data to kind of inform fisheries management.

I know that many folks sitting on the webinar helped participate in those interviews, and so I really thank you for doing that, and I learned a ton from this work, and, again, if folks want to check out those interview results, there is kind of a link in your slides, in your briefing book, that you can check it out.

What the hope was is we would use the information gathered through those interviews to put together some research that could gather that same sort of information, but from a much broader group of fishermen and scientists and managers. Rick, you know, talked to eighteen people, and there's a lot larger group of kind of scientists, fishermen, and managers that are in our region, and so we want to get information from a broader group.

We were really lucky to be able to find some funding to kind of help move this research forward, towards the end of last year, and so Rick Bonney is going to lead our research efforts to gather information from a broader group of scientists and managers, and he's going to use an online survey to do that, and then we're really excited to be partnering with a research team made up of Jennifer Sweeney-Tookes, who is at Georgia Southern, and is actually on the webinar today, and

Tracy Yandle, who used to work at Emory, and has recently moved to New Zealand, then Bryan Fluech, who is with Georgia Sea Grant.

They're going to work to gather information from a broader group of fishermen, through doing more of these interviews, and so I wanted to share a little bit of information about the work they're going to be doing with all of you guys, and I know Jennifer is online, and so, Jennifer, if you have things to add, just raise your hand, and we'll unmute you.

One of the things that Jennifer, and kind of her research team, are really trying to do is gather kind of diverse perspectives, from kind of a larger group of fishermen, and they wanted to design a sampling method that could be repeated in the future, and so, if they were interview kind of a group of fishermen now, and then, in five years, or ten years, we would be able to look to see if there were changes in folks' perspectives over time.

It's a little daunting, when thinking about trying to gather kind of information from commercial, recreational, and for-hire fishermen across all four of our Atlantic states, and, although we did get some funding, it's pretty limited, and so Jennifer, and her team, did a great kind of -- They came up with a great plan, we think, to kind of gather this information, and, as many people say, how do you eat an elephant? You eat it one bite at a time, and so they came up with a great plan to kind of take a first bite to gather this information from a broader group of fishermen.

Just to let you know a little bit about the interviews, and so, for the commercial and for-hire sector, they're trying to figure out kind of who is the population, or the universe, of fishermen that they might want to kind of interview, and so they looked at the NOAA permit database for all the South Atlantic permittees, and I think there are over 19,000 permittees, and so that is a good starting point, but that's still kind of daunting, and we don't have the funding to be able to interview that large of a group of people, and so they really decided to zero-in on two of our kind of big fisheries, and so they're going to be hoping to interview folks who have permits in the snapper grouper and the mackerel fisheries, and they're two of our kind of largest fisheries, and so we were really excited about this approach.

Then the number of snapper grouper and mackerel permittees is still pretty huge, and so they're looking to focus at kind of four geographical areas, to further kind of break down that universe into a manageable kind of sampling population, and, to help inform how they're breaking down our total region into four geographic areas, they're looking at things like recent landings for these kind of snapper grouper or mackerel species, and then also using some social science data that NOAA Fisheries has pulled together that looks at kind of snapshots of fishing communities, to see kind of species that are important to that community, and so they're kind of using that information together to figure out which four geographic areas to focus on. After kind of they limit the population on those four geographic areas, they will be kind of randomly selecting people from that pool to invite to do interviews.

The private recreational sector is a little bit different, and we don't have a kind of -- A license database for our federal fisheries, and so what they decided to focus on was to try to get kind of a universe of recreational fishermen that have kind of a demonstrated, or sustained, interest in fishing, and they were defining that as being a member of a fishing club, or a fishing organization, and so that could be everything from kind of a local fishing club, or a national fishing organization, or even kind of a fishing group on Facebook or other social media. They're using that to try to

define their kind of universe of anglers, and they're going to try to focus on the same four geographic regions that will be focused on for the commercial and for-hire fisheries, and so that's the plan for the recreational kind of sector.

As far as kind of recruiting fishermen to participate in the studies, for the commercial and for-hire sector, they're planning to send postcards, or make telephone calls, to kind of invite people to do these interviews. The private recreational sector is a little bit more challenging, and so things they're looking into are kind of sending emails to fishing organizations, or fishing clubs, communicating with folks via social media, and then, once they get in touch with organizations, basically asking for input on the best ways to kind of communicate, or share, or invite folks to participate in these interviews, via methods that the organizations may suggest.

If someone is game to do an interview, they're going to let that person kind of choose what method they would like to be interviewed, whatever is most comfortable for them, or easiest for them, and so folks can do phone interviews, and they can do online interviews, via kind of webinar or Zoom, or they could do an in-person interview, and so Jennifer and her team are going to be visiting each of these four geographic regions once, so they're able to hopefully do some in-person interviews with folks.

One of the main reasons that I am sharing all this information with you guys is to let you know that they're doing this work, and, if they contact you, or reach out to you, to ask if you would be willing to do an interview, I wanted to encourage you to consider participating. We really want to learn more about you guys' thoughts on citizen science, and using citizen science data in management, and so, if you are contacted, please consider doing one of these interviews. You guys have a lot of important insights that we're really trying to learn more about.

Then the last thing that I wanted to say is we're hoping to get a little more information from you guys for this project, and one of the things we're hoping to get input from you guys on are kind of suggestions for contacts for fishing clubs, or other fishing organizations, that may be good to reach out to, to see if they would be willing to participate in this research, and I know that Jennifer and Tracy and her crew have already started pulling a list together, and we're going to share information that we have, but, if you guys have specific contacts in clubs that would be good for us to reach out, we would love to get that from you, and you can kind of let us know today, put it in the question window, or kind of contact us later.

Then the other thing that we were really hoping to get some input from you guys on today too was suggestions for kind of recruiting folks to do these interviews. I shared information on our gameplan for recruitment, but I wanted to see if you guys had methods of what may work best to kind of ask commercial, for-hire, or recreational fishermen to participate in this process, and so, you know, is an email best, is a text best, or what do you guys think are kind of the best recruitment methods to get folks to participate in this work?

I will end there, and I will say, Jennifer, if I kind of mischaracterized anything, or left anything out, feel free to raise your hand, and then I really was looking to see if you guys have any input on either of these questions. First, Jennifer, I see you have your hand raised, and it looks like you're muted on your end, and so go ahead.

DR. SWEENEY-TOOKES: I just had to say that that was a beautiful explanation, Julia, and I think you explained that much better actually than I did the last time, and so, yes, she nailed it, and I'm really looking forward to the ideas and suggestions that you all have, and so thank you so much for thinking about this.

MS. BYRD: All right. William Jones, thank you so much, and I see you've put a couple of fishing clubs into the question window, and thanks so much for that, and, if anyone else has any kind of feedback on organizations that may be good for us to talk to, or suggestions on recruitment methods, please raise your hand. Ira, go ahead.

MR. LAKS: I think you could probably, you know, work with the MREP database, and that might help.

MS. BYRD: That's a great idea.

MR. LAKS: The Marine Resource Education Program is what I mean by MREP, not to confuse anybody.

MS. BYRD: Thanks, Ira. That's a great suggestion. Anyone else? If you don't have any suggestions right now, but things pop into your mind during the meeting, feel free to add them into the kind of question window, and we can capture them that way, or, if things pop into your mind afterwards, feel free to reach out to Christina or myself, and we have some other kind of folks typing things into the question window too, and thanks so much. That's so helpful to get kind of additional suggestions on how best to kind of identify private recreational fishermen, and so thanks so much for that, and keep up the ideas, and feel free to keep adding them to the question window as they come to you.

I guess a question about the recruitment methods is, for the commercial and for-hire fishery, it's mainly -- We're mainly thinking about -- Jennifer and crew are mainly thinking about contacting folks via postcard or phone call, and do you all think that that's efficient? I know we had a meeting earlier this week, and folks suggested maybe sending -- If we have phone numbers, to maybe send a text, or something like that, and I don't know if you guys have thoughts on that.

MS. WIEGAND: Will Jones.

MR. JONES: If you're doing it during the fishing season, definitely email, and a call is fine, but email is one of the best ways, because we're so busy, and we miss a lot of calls, and we have to filter through a lot of spam and all that stuff, and so definitely at least email, at the minimum.

MS. BYRD: Thanks, Will, and, Thomas, I saw you said that text is good for you. Any other thoughts on that, or with kind of private recreational folks? Do you think emails, newsletters, social media are kind of the best kind of approaches there, or do you have kind of other ideas or suggestions?

MS. WIEGAND: Tony.

MR. BENEVENTO: How long does the actual interview take?

MS. BYRD: I would defer a little bit to Jennifer on this. I know, when Rick Bonney did kind of that first short round of interviews, the interviews were around thirty to forty minutes, and, Jennifer, hop in there.

DR. SWEENEY-TOOKES: That's a great question, and, honestly, it depends a lot on the person and their own schedule and how much they would like to tell us. Usually interviews take about thirty minutes. If someone is feeling particularly salty, or has a lot to say, sometimes it takes an hour, but that's really just up to them, and we can be very efficient and get it done in twenty or thirty minutes.

MR. BENEVENTO: Okay. I don't have a suggestion then.

DR. SWEENEY-TOOKES: If I had given you a different timeframe, would you have had a suggestion?

MR. BENEVENTO: Well, I was going to say that we're in the midst of all these kingfish tournaments, and you could set up a booth at the tournament, and get -- You know, 200 or 300 people are going to walk through that are fishermen, but they're not going to sit for an hour and talk to you. You may be able to get set up for another time and date, but that was just an idea.

DR. SWEENEY-TOOKES: That's a good idea, and I'm glad that you mentioned that. Thank you.

MS. BYRD: All right. That's kind of all we had on the Citizen Science Program, unless you all have any kind of additional questions, or thoughts, for us, and, again, we can't thank you enough for kind of all of the feedback and input that you've provided and so for many of you offering to bring photos at your in-person meeting, and so, with that, I will turn it back over to you, Ira. Thanks so much.

MR. LAKS: Thank you, Julia. That was really good, and it's very interesting stuff. I'm excited to bring some pictures. I think we're going to move into a mackerel port meeting discussion now. Do we want to jump into that, or does anyone want to take a five-minute break? I think we can jump into it, and then we'll take a break after that. We'll go another half-hour or forty minutes. Does that sound good to everybody? If anyone wants a break, raise their hand. I don't see any hands, and so we're ready to start with the king and Spanish mackerel port meetings.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Well, I am excited to give this presentation to you guys. I'm going to go over, you know, just a little bit of background, for any new AP members, to sort of explain how we came to this idea of doing port meetings, and I'll go over some of the activities that are currently going on in the king and Spanish mackerel fisheries, many of which you guys are aware of. We'll note, again, those FMP goals and objectives, and then sort of get into the council's most recent discussions relative to port meetings.

If you guys will remember, this idea to hold port meetings came directly from advisory panel members. Way back in April of 2019, and then again most recently at your meeting in October, you had requested that the council set up a series of meetings where council members and staff would go up and down the coast and take time to meet informally with participants in the king and

Spanish mackerel fisheries, in order to try to gain a much more holistic understanding of the fishery.

I certainly don't need to be telling you guys this, but the king and Spanish mackerel fisheries are incredibly dynamic, and incredibly complex, and the council really realizes that it's important for them to have a full understanding of these dynamics, so that, when they're discussing management for these fisheries, they can take all of those different complexities into account.

Just to give you guys an update on some of the things that are going on in these fisheries, and sort of why now is a really opportune time to conduct these port meetings, one of the biggest being the Atlantic Spanish mackerel stock assessment, and I know you guys have been waiting to get the results of this stock assessment for a very long time, especially given that the assessment was completed back in July of 2022, and I'm not going to get into too many details of how this has sort of bounced back and forth with the Scientific and Statistical Committee, but, ultimately, at their meeting just earlier this week, the SSC did make catch level recommendations.

Those catch level recommendations are going to go to the council in June, and then, of course, you all will be meeting this summer to discuss that assessment, and there will likely be management needs, now that we've got those assessment results, and so this is really a great time to be holding port meetings, so that the council can gather a lot of information from stakeholders like yourselves, so that, when we're putting management into place, in response to this assessment, it's taking into account everything that is happening up and down the coast.

The other things that have been happening is, if you will remember at your October meeting, you guys also requested that the council review the current split season that's in place for Atlantic king mackerel in the Southern Zone, which is the commercial fishery, and the king mackerel fishery, in particular, has some of the most complex management that the South Atlantic Council deals with, and it has been subject to a lot of sort of small changes over the years, trying to get a management structure that's going to fit that fishery well, and so, again, this is sort of an opportunity for the council to take a step back, look at that fishery from a bigger picture, to decide what can be done to maybe simplify management or make management work a little bit better for fishermen.

Then, of course, the American Saltwater Guides Association requested that the council consider readding little tunny to the CMP FMP, and you all discussed this in October, and the council chose not to move forward with continuing to discuss this, but it is an issue that has come up a number of times, and is likely something that would come during port meeting discussions as well.

Then, of course, the objectives of the CMP FMP, and I gave you guys a brief presentation about this at the last meeting, and all of our FMPs are required, by Magnuson, to have a series of goals and objectives that help drive management, and the ones for the CMP FMP have not been updated since the early 1990s, meaning they are pretty out-of-date, and so one of the council's goals, with conducting these port meetings, will be to sort of revise all of these objectives that you see on your screen, to make sure that the new objectives going into the CMP FMP fit with the current goals of the fishery and the stakeholders.

One of the things we did at the March meeting, now that the council has sort of approved us moving forward with holding these port meetings, was we had a bit of a discussion with them on what they wanted to achieve, sort of, you know, let them start throwing things at the wall, to talk about what

do they feel like they need, or don't know, that they would like stakeholders to provide information on, and so, of course, they want to understand the complexity of these mackerel fisheries, looking at things like expansion and movement of the fisheries, and how fishermen are responding, and we've certainly heard, over and over and over again, with Spanish mackerel, as well as king mackerel, that we're seeing these species further and further north every year.

They want to understand how the fishery is really utilized and valued by different fleets and the different sectors, and, like I said, this is a dynamic fishery, particularly the commercial fleet, and how those dynamics play into fleet mobility, different markets, and sort of spatial seasonality of the fishery, and then environmental factors, like water quality, harmful algal blooms, and how are these things affecting the king and Spanish mackerel fisheries.

Then how they interact with other important fisheries, and, of course, I mentioned little tunny earlier, and cobia is also a part of this FMP, and how those fisheries may interact with cobia, and then, finally, what gears are currently being used, and how that has changed over time. King and Spanish mackerel has been subject to a number of regulation changes, both at the federal level as well as the state level, that have sort of altered how fishermen have chosen to prosecute these fisheries.

What are these meetings going to look like? We are still at the very, very beginning planning stages for these meetings, but the council has decided that they would like them to focus on king and Spanish mackerel, but, of course, to be prepared for other species to come up in discussion, like cobia and little tunny, to make sure that we're ready to sort of gather information on those species without losing focus on the purpose, which is going to be the king and Spanish mackerel fisheries.

These meetings are going to be open to all members of the public, and we're going to hold them up and down the coast, and so, like Tom mentioned in his update to you all, we've asked the Gulf Council if they would be interested in participating in something like this, and we'll be presenting to them at their August meeting, and then the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission has already agreed to be heavily involved, and so we'll be holding meetings all the way up to the southern end of Massachusetts.

Ultimately, there are sort of two things that will likely come out of this process, and one will be those revised goals and objectives for the FMP that I talked about, and the other will be a final report that includes not just notes from all the meetings, but a thematic analysis that will identify different patterns and themes that came up over and over again at these different port meetings, as we moved up and down the coast.

Next steps, and, like I said, we are at the very, very beginning stages of planning this meeting, and this is the first time you guys are hearing any details, and you will likely hear about it again this summer, and continuing forward for quite some time. We're really going to need to develop a structure for these port meetings and consider the best way to sort of facilitate them and have conversations with stakeholders that come to these meetings.

Again, like I said, we'll be coordinating with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, and we'll likely also be reaching out to the Mid-Atlantic and New England Fishery Management Councils as well, since we will be holding some of these meetings in their area of jurisdiction, and

so that was a very brief presentation, but that's where we are with port meetings currently, and I've got a couple of discussion questions for you.

Perhaps the most important, and the one that I expect, you know, to get a lot of input from you guys on, is what do you hope to accomplish with these port meetings? This is a request that came from the AP, and so the council would really like to make sure that the AP's goals and objectives are met, as we go through this, and so I will sort of start with that big-picture question for you guys, and, you know, I hope to get some feedback from you on what you would like to see come out of these port meetings, and what information you think the council really needs to understand about these fisheries to improve management. Go ahead, Ira, and you don't have to raise your hand. You're the chair, and you get to run things.

MR. LAKS: Guys, I just really would like you just to give your opinions to this, and, really, you know, it's a wide range of area that you guys are in, and you have different needs in both of these fisheries in your different areas, and you're all from different sectors, and, you know, from my point of view, and having this on my mind, for many years in this advisory panel, is that, you know, this fish is subject to range expansion, and changing of where it was historically caught, and, in the commercial industry, there is fleet movement that's going to have to, you know, come into this, and how do you deal with different state licenses and access to infrastructure for commercial fishermen?

As far as like the for-hire industry, I know that the Mid-Atlantic should have CMP for-hire permits, and very few do, and I think we need to get a handle on that, and I personally, Christina, would like to know if the for-hire VTRs in the Mid-Atlantic even have Spanish and king mackerel on them, or what some of those catches are, and what the number of permits are out of the fleet up that way, and just get a better handle on the recreational fishery. I know I see a lot more, you know, reports of people that are catching them all the way in New Jersey and New York, and I think, until we get a better handle on that, we're going to be in the dark, and so I would love you guys to jump in and elaborate on what you would like. I see, Thomas, you've got your hand raised.

MR. NEWMAN: I guess I will kind of go into the questions, the discussion question page, and what I really would like to see out of these port meetings is kind of like maybe what everybody has seen in the past ten or fifteen years, maybe, especially as we go further north, because I know, like I said, more fishermen are seeing more mackerel further north, and I would like to know whether or not they're capitalizing on the opportunities, or they're just noticing the fish jumping or whatnot, whether it's more of a directed fishery versus a bycatch fishery, and where they think the fisheries is going, you know, on the for-hire sector and on the commercial sector, and what they need.

I mean, I was talking to a fishermen in Maryland, just a few weeks ago, and he was concerned with the early closures in the commercial fisheries, and that the fish aren't even in Maryland yet, but when they go to the 500-pound trip limit, and I'm just kind of curious to see what they want, what they need further north, and what they think they, you know, might could harvest, on both the recreational and the commercial side. I will let somebody else go, and I will keep thinking.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. I don't see any other hands up, but I am going to, you know, encourage you guys to think pretty hard about this. These port meetings are going to take a lot of sort of time to develop, both council time and time for this AP, and so I think it's really important to make sure

that you all come away from this process feeling like there's a product moving forward that is going to be beneficial for you and your businesses and your fisheries.

MR. LAKS: I see Steve has got his hand up, and Thomas again, I believe.

MR. ENGLISH: From the commercial side, and that's what I'm speaking for, out of the port meetings, what I hope to accomplish is that every state is on the same page with how we're going to land the fish for the commercial sector, and, by that, I mean, we don't need Florida to have a 500-pound bycatch limit after the quota is met, and North Carolina to have a 200-pound, and Virginia to have a 2,000-pound, and right on up the line. We need to get some consensus, and all the states need to be in line as to how we're going to land these Spanish mackerel, and, in particular, after the quota is met, because we're catching our quota up so fast, and that's always going to be an issue, and so that's my main -- That's one of my main goals for this, and I will have some stuff on some other stuff later. Thank you.

MR. LAKS: Thomas.

MR. NEWMAN: I would definitely be willing to help organize and recruit participants, in North Carolina for sure, and I know North Carolina has already got a lot of data that we got from that white paper that we put together in 2019, to see where most of the mackerel were landed on the commercial side anyway, and so that would, you know, identify where we need to hold these meetings at. Like I said, definitely be in touch with me, because, like I said, I've been pretty active on this issue, on the state and federal level, and so any help I can be with you all, Christina, just reach out to me, email or call, because I am definitely all for these port meetings.

MS. WIEGAND: Thanks, Thomas. I am going to keep pushing you guys to think a little bit more on this, and so we've heard from Steve and Thomas, who are talking a lot about Spanish mackerel, and, of course, with the stock assessment coming down the line, Spanish mackerel will be a huge topic of discussion, but I'm also curious to hear from some of you guys on the line that I know fish for king mackerel as well, and what maybe you would like to see come out of this for the king mackerel fishery.

MR. LAKS: Christina, I would be curious -- Like, you know, Keith, what do you think, and you're a traveling fisherman, right, and you follow the fish, and, if the fish go north, and you have to travel, and how do you navigate different places, and different licenses, and I would also be curious from some of the recreational guys, you know, especially out of Jacksonville, where they mentioned all the tournaments. I mean, do we really have a handle on all these tournaments, and how many fish are getting caught, regardless of the fact of what's getting sold, but, you know, it's targeting large fish, and do we not have a good enough handle to know how many of these there are, and, you know, are we underestimating catch, because of all these tournaments? What's the economic value of them?

I would like to hear from you guys from that, and you know, there's other things that, personally, I would -- Like I just listened to some of the SSC meeting, and they were talking about fishermen's portfolios, and, you know, I know this is a hard sell coming up, but there's going to be a point where these fish are stretched out across the lines, and the permits are going to be in one area, and are we going to have to change our permitting system, or are there things that we can do, like short-term leases of permits, or re-registering to different boats, so that, when fish aren't in Florida, and

they're in Virginia, or north of there even, in years to come, and can I let someone fish my permit for half the year?

All things like that, and I want you guys to just think out of your head and what things like you would like to just see come out of it, and, also, for some of the for-hire guys, I know you had mentioned about overcapacity in the for-hire fleet, and too many charter vessels, and when is enough enough, and so, if you guys can jump in with all of that, I would appreciate it. Keith, I see your hand up.

MR. BOWEN: I think, as far as management in our area, I feel like it's pretty solid right now, and I feel like -- You know, I heard somebody mention something about possibly doing what Ira mentioned before, with having one full season versus two, and that could be something that might be addressed, but, I mean, as of right now, it's working pretty good.

I feel like, if things continue to trend north, there will definitely have to be some things looked at for licenses, like Ira was saying, but, as of right now, until fish -- You know, a big number of fish are starting to be caught up that way, you know, I think everything is, you know, working really well at this point.

MR. LAKS: Tony B., go ahead.

MR. BENEVENTO: Ira, you asked about, you know, the tournaments and so forth in Jacksonville, and you're 100 percent accurate, and we follow the fish. If they're up in Georgia, and you have to fish off of Savannah, then you need to get not only a Florida license, but a Georgia license, and, you know, run through thousands of gallons of gasoline to chase them. If there is a temperature inversion, or something, off of Jacksonville, it messes things up, and we've gone as far south as Canaveral before, again to chase the fish.

Now, twenty years, or fifteen years, ago, tournaments used to fill out. You know, a thousand boats was not uncommon, and 400, or 500, boats was about the norm. Since the recession of 2006 to 2009, those numbers have been cut way, way, way down, and our local tournament probably has 300 boats, and it's gone to one day of fishing, and a two-fish aggregate, and some of the other tournaments, or most of the other tournaments, are one-day tournaments, largest fish only, and so I don't think these tournaments are putting a dent in the population, at least not like they may have in the 1980s and 1990s, when they were at the apex, and I believe my friend from St. Augustine, who fished the SKA, can also attest to the fact that these tournaments are not what they used to be.

MS. WIEGAND: Thank you all for that input, and so, sort of moving down the list of questions, I've got how should we go about identifying key communities? Sort of, when you think about port meetings for king and Spanish mackerel, what places do you think, well, of course they have to hold a meeting in, you know, Hatteras or what have you, and staff will certainly pull landings, and permits, to try to identify the best places to hold these meetings, but you all are in these communities, and you all know the fishermen, and what communities sort of jump out at you as, you know, you're going to hold port meetings, you would making a huge mistake if you didn't hold them here?

MR. LAKS: I would say, for south Florida, you probably need one in the Lauderdale area, and then probably the Jupiter/Stuart/Port Salerno area, and then probably somewhere -- I would defer

a little more to Keith on this, but probably Sebastian, or Cape Canaveral, or somewhere close to both of them, or in between, and then maybe up at Ponce Inlet, and, Keith, if you jump in. After Thomas, we'll go to Keith.

MR. NEWMAN: Definitely, for North Carolina, Hatteras and Wanchese are the two big communities that catch mackerel in North Carolina, and we do have some harvested down there in Carteret and Pamlico County commercially. Recreationally, probably like Wilmington, or Morehead, or probably both, but Tom, or Will, would probably know more about that, and there's a little bit of commercial fishing down there as well, but, up north of Virginia, I think maybe Ocean City, Maryland, and I know there's some people in Chincoteague that commercially fish for Spanish mackerel, and there are some further up the Chesapeake, but that area is kind of like -- I don't know the most central location for that, but I can -- I know some good contacts to get a recommendation in that area, but definitely kind of like in that Maryland and Virginia, and there's a third state right there too, but, like I said, just keep in contact with me, Christina, for any help up that way.

MR. LAKS: Go ahead, Keith, and then Will, and then Tom Roller.

MR. BOWEN: Ira, I think that Ponce Inlet and Daytona would be a good place, and Port Canaveral, and probably Stuart, down in that area, and I'm not too sure, once you get south, you know, the Lauderdale area, where would be the best, but I think, you know, those would be the best in this area here.

MR. LAKS: Go ahead, Will.

MR. JONES: I will just second what Thomas Newman said. Wanchese, Morehead City, and then somewhere around Wilmington, Southport, or Wrightsville Beach, but North Carolina would probably be good with, you know, three different places.

MR. LAKS: Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you. I'm going to reiterate what Thomas said, and Will said, and, obviously, we have to have some sort of meeting, you know, that includes the Hatteras and Dare County area, and, you know, Wanchese has always been a good central location for that. Where I really struggle with is if North Carolina -- Do we have two meetings, or do we have three meetings, and my personal feeling is that we have kind of three regions in this state, and the fishery out of Wilmington is going to be very different than the fishery out of Beaufort and Morehead City, which is also a very central area for a big part of the state, and I struggle that, if we were just to have one meeting in the southeast part of the state, if we would really encompass the whole fleet, if that makes sense. Wilmington is a couple of hours away, and you've got Southport and Oak Island and all that sort of stuff, and so, you know, we may -- Three meetings might be ideal for this state.

MR. LAKS: Christina, I think, the amount of meetings, I think that, you know, in Florida, you maybe want to do something like West Palm Beach, or Jupiter, where you can reach Fort Lauderdale and the Stuart area, and then maybe Cape Canaveral, and then maybe somewhere -- You know, as the gentleman who was talking about the tournaments up in the Jacksonville and St. Augustine area, and maybe, you know, Flagler Beach or something, because I know we're limited

on resources, and we can't have a meeting in every town, and so that might be something to look at, to space out the fishery in Florida, because the geographic range is so long.

MS. WIEGAND: Thank you guys, so much, for this input. You know, we're still a ways off from selecting specific places, and the number of meetings, but this information from you really helps me groundtruth the landings information, and the permits information, that I'm pulling, and so this is incredibly helpful input. Thank you.

MR. LAKS: Go ahead, Steve.

MR. ENGLISH: Ira, I think Stuart has got to be one of the central locations for Spanish mackerel. I mean, it's the center of the Spanish mackerel fishery, and they're caught in Fort Pierce and Port Salerno, and so, you know, Stuart or Fort Pierce, but I think Stuart is probably going to be your best bet, right there on the beach, and it's close to everybody, and you've had meetings there before, and I think that's almost a must.

MR. LAKS: Thank you, Steve.

MS. WIEGAND: All right, and so one of my next questions, or I guess more of an ask, really, is would you guys be willing to help organize and recruit participants for port meetings, and so, Thomas, thank you so much for already jumping in and volunteering to do this, but I think, from, you know, my perspective as staff, having you guys help participate in these port meetings, and help recruit people, is going to be essential to their success. You guys are the leaders in the community, and you guys know the fishermen in the community, and you know the groups that we need to have come out and participate, and so I'm hopeful that there are a number of you that are going to be willing to not only attend these, but sort of help organize and reach out to fishermen in your area to attend.

MR. LAKS: I will be absolutely willing to help out.

MR. ENGLISH: I will, too.

MR. JONES: Definitely, with social media, it's pretty easy to do that, and I definitely will be doing that, to help out.

MR. BOWEN: I will also be able to help out on that part of it.

MS. WIEGAND: Excellent. Thank you, guys. I will definitely be reaching out to you, as we move further down in this process and start identifying specific locations, and so you're going to be sick of having me email you, but I really appreciate your offer to help recruit and get people involved in this process.

I guess the last thing that I wanted to have a brief conversation about how was how you would recommend that staff facilitate these discussions. Like I said, we're going to start trying to narrow down some semblance of a structure for these meetings, and we want this to be very different from sort of the traditional public comment that fishermen are used to experiencing at say a council meeting or during a public hearing. We would like this to be much more discussion-based and interactive, and so you guys, as AP members, have attended a number of meetings over the years,

and not just AP meetings, but I know that many of you were around when we were doing visioning for snapper grouper, or have attended other sort of stakeholder-driven meetings, and so I was curious if any of you all had any thoughts, or perspectives, on how you would like to see meetings run.

Do you prefer, you know, things like having someone at the front, who is writing down thoughts as people present them, or do you prefer more of a question-and-answer-style format, or do you like breakout groups, where we would, you know, move fishermen into these small groups to talk about specific things, and so just if you all have any thoughts on how you best like to interact in these types of meetings.

MR. LAKS: Go ahead, Thomas.

MR. NEWMAN: I know North Carolina put a white paper together in 2019, when we had our first commercial Spanish mackerel closure, and that handout was super helpful, and it was super informational, and it was mostly graphs and tables, and I think it was only ten or twelve pages long, and I think something like that, for each state, but also to give like an overall, you know, coast-wide fisheries picture, and I think something like that, that's sent out ahead of time, like maybe a week ahead of time, that people could print off, and, also, there would be handouts at the meeting, and I think that would help facilitate some of this discussion, and the same thing with this presentation.

Like have these same questions kind of directing -- Kind of directing the flow of the meeting, and I don't think that you need to break it up into workgroups or anything, but I think there needs to be some questions given to the participants ahead of time, to go ahead and kind of focus the meeting, and you could go over these questions like we're doing right now, one by one, and keep the crowd engaged, and, you know, you can pick out some of the people who maybe aren't being quite as vocal too, you know just trying to keep everybody involved in the meeting, but I really like the kind of open format that we have here on this AP, and I think that kind of same open format would be great on these mackerel port meetings.

MR. LAKS: Steve and then Tom Roller.

MR. ENGLISH: I think mainly you need the representatives from the Atlantic States Commission, that can make sure they're there and the states are represented, so that we can get, you know, some uniformity between them, and I think that's one of the main goals that we should be trying to achieve, is uniformity in what we come up with, and so that's something I definitely think we should have in there.

MS. WIEGAND: Ira, I think Tom Roller has got his hand up.

MR. ROLLER: I am just waiting for the permission.

MR. LAKS: Go ahead.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you, Ira. I just wanted to say that I attended the dolphin workshops back in early 2020, right before COVID started, and I really enjoyed that format, and I think it was really helpful, and it was very similar to the AP, but staff had a couple little exercises, like a graph

with the fishery, how it has changed over time, stuff like that, and I thought we had some really, really good discussions from that.

MR. LAKS: I was just going to say that I don't think we can really break it up into sectors, and it's got to be an open conversation, and we have to kind of format it in a way that we're not spending too much time, if there's people there from all sectors, and I think a question-and-answer time, maybe even at the beginning, might disarm some of the angst that's in the room and help facilitate the conversation. Go ahead, Charlie.

MR. LOCKE: I think you definitely want to keep the sectors together, because I think there's a lot of clarity when you get the groups in there, and they kind of hear all the information, because I know, like in the mahi ones we've had before, you know, the recreational crowd -- A lot of times, they have such a misguided view of things, and then, when they get in there, and they actually see the numbers and the facts, and what's being caught by the longliners, and they've only got 8 percent of the quota, and the recreational has got 92, and everybody's eyes kind of get opened, and so I definitely believe it's better to have all the user groups together. I think it's more informative, and I learn things about their fisheries, and they learn things about mine, and I would definitely recommend keeping all the sectors together.

MR. LAKS: Does anyone else have any thoughts on how we can make it work for everybody? Have you got your hand raised again, Charlie?

MR. LOCKE: I meant to put it down. Sorry.

MS. WIEGAND: I don't see any other hands popping up, but I just wanted to say thank you, guys, for being willing to provide this input, for offering your help in organizing these port meetings, and, like I said, this is a request that came from the AP, and I think, as we go down this process, we're going to be able to get some just really fantastic information out of it, and so you'll probably hear about this again at our meeting this summer, and I will keep you all updated.

MR. LAKS: Go ahead, Steve.

MR. ENGLISH: I have one concern, from some of the paperwork we've got here, and I need to figure out what we're doing with this. On our CMP FMP objectives sheet, if you go down the list, we've got Objectives 1 through 8, and Objective 5 just jumps out at me, and I am disturbed by it. Objective 5 says we redistribute the allowable catch of mackerel between commercial and recreational in the 1970s, and this has no place in this, and this is not where that should be discussed.

First of all, if you go back to the 1970s, where there is no information and all, about 95 percent of it was caught by the commercial sector, and so you really don't want to do that, to begin with, and I'm sure somebody has got some numbers somewhere that they're going to put in there to try and -- There's a reason for this, and I would like to eliminate Objective 5 from being presented in this document in this, because this has no place in this part of this discussion. This should be for our management discussions, and it should be based on true, accurate numbers and not something that we have no numbers for.

Earlier, when we were doing the scientific thing, I heard the girl say that there are no numbers from the 1970s, and, yet, we have something like this on this piece of paper, and so I would like to make a motion that we take Objective 5 off of this CMP FMP objective sheet.

MR. LAKS: I don't know if we can do that. Christina, I think we can suggest it, but I don't think we can do that, right?

MS. WIEGAND: You guys can certainly make a motion to recommend it to the council, and I will say that part of this process will be to completely revise these objectives. The council is certainly aware that they're dated, given that they have not been updated since the early 1990s, and so part of the discussion that the council will have, and then that will come back to you, will be related to these objectives, and so I would say it's perfectly within the AP's purview to recommend to the council to remove this Objective 5.

MR. LAKS: Steve, would you like to make a motion to do that?

MR. ENGLISH: **Yes, I would like to make a motion to eliminate Objective 5.**

MR. BOWEN: I will second that.

MR. LAKS: Is there any discussion of that? Hearing no discussion, I guess we're going to take a vote. **All those in favor, raise your hands.**

MS. WIEGAND: Give me just a quick second, Ira, or I guess, Myra, are you going to type the names up on the hands raised, so everyone can see whose hand is currently raised?

MS. BROUWER: Sure. I can do that.

MS. WIEGAND: Thank you.

MR. LAKS: **Is there anyone opposed to the motion? Is there anyone abstains?**

MS. BROUWER: If you could call out the opposed again, and there was still some hands raised, I think, from before.

MR. LAKS: Okay. **Is there anyone who is opposed to the motion?** Please raise your hand. Is that everybody?

MS. WIEGAND: There are some people that haven't voted, and you could ask for abstentions.

MR. LAKS: **Is there any abstentions? One abstention. The motion passes.**

MS. WIEGAND: Just one thing that I want to note, before, Tony, we got to you, is that this is certainly not the last time that you all will see these objectives, and there will likely be meetings, if not this summer, then certainly soon after that, where the AP will discuss these objectives in a lot more detail, and so this will not be the last time that you guys have the opportunity to look at these.

MR. LAKS: Tony, go ahead.

MR. BENEVENTO: Christina, I think you probably answered it, and why opposed it, but shouldn't we put like maybe a sentence of rationale, as to why we opposed it?

MS. WIEGAND: The discussion that was had around the motion will certainly be captured in the AP report that's provided to the council. Absolutely.

MR. BENEVENTO: Okay. That's good.

MR. LAKS: Rusty.

MR. HUDSON: I am looking for the final --

MR. LAKS: **I think it was seven in favor and one abstain.**

MR. HUDSON: Thank you.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Well, that's all I had for port meetings, Ira. Thank you, all, for the discussion.

MR. LAKS: There is one more thing that I wanted to add to the port meeting discussion, real quick, Christina, if that's okay, and that's, you know, I know that we're going to have the port meetings, and people are free to bring up whatever they want, right, but the way it looks to me is we're not advertising little tunny, right, and that's not going to be on the agenda, or be free to people to comment on?

MS. WIEGAND: Correct, and it won't be on the agenda, and the focus on these port meetings is going to be king and Spanish mackerel. The council just wanted to make sure that staff was prepared, particularly as we move up into the Mid-Atlantic region, where some of these topics that the council has talked about in the past may come up, to make sure that, you know, we can gather information from fishermen on those things that may be important, but still be able to sort of turn it back to the main focus, which will be king and Spanish mackerel.

MR. LAKS: Okay. I'm just making sure, because I realize the value of the king and Spanish mackerel, and I don't know if that's the appropriate place to get sidetracked with that, and so thank you. Steve English.

MR. ENGLISH: Just one more thing that might be of interest in these port meetings, and really, because we'll have a lot of people at them that are interested, but is trying to come up with a verifiable recreational landings system -- If we can come up with that, then we'll have numbers that are accurate on both sides, and we won't be in the position we're in in this, and, when we have meetings like these port meetings, we want to have accurate data to give to everybody. Right now, we don't have accurate data on the Spanish mackerel from, you know, the recreational side, and so I'm just thinking that maybe that might be something that we want to, you know, pursue, is maybe some ideas on how to get verifiable, accurate recreational landings, you know, something we can do with that, and that's about it.

MR. LAKS: I agree with you, Steve, and I think that's a much larger conversation that's going on throughout all of fishery management, especially in the Southeast, and I don't know if that's something that we probably want to put down as a goal, because I don't think that will be accomplished by the time we get to these meetings, and so I don't really want to bog that down, but I definitely hear what you're saying about that, and I think there's processes, as slow as they are, that work towards that, if that's an okay answer, that we don't put it down in writing.

MR. ENGLISH: Yes, that's fine with me, and I'm just -- I just know that's something we need, and that's the one thing that we have to have, and so as long as we work towards that.

MR. LAKS: Rusty, go ahead.

MR. HUDSON: Thank you, Ira. Anyway, I agree that part of the recreational sectors, and I say that in the plural, are providing information, but it would be nice to have an overarching picture of all the sectors, eventually. Thank you.

MS. WIEGAND: Well, that's all I had, Ira, and I didn't know if you wanted to take a five-minute break now or keep rolling forward.

MR. LAKS: That's up to these guys. If you want a little break, raise your hand.

MS. WIEGAND: We've got hands going up.

MR. LAKS: All right. Let's take a quick, five-minute break, guys.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MS. WIEGAND: Ira, I've got time, and I'm ready to continue whenever you're ready to continue. I'm sure that people are trickling back to their computers.

MR. LAKS: All right. Back to it, and so we're going into South Atlantic research recommendations, and we're going to get an overview from Christina and Chip, and I will turn it over to them.

DR. COLLIER: Christina, I will start this off, if that's all right.

MS. WIEGAND: Take it away, Chip.

DR. COLLIER: All right. Thank you, all, for the time today. The South Atlantic Council updates their research and monitoring plan every two years, and the reason that they have a research and monitoring plan is, one, it's a requirement of the Magnuson-Stevens Act that we do have one that we provide to the Southeast Fisheries Science Center, as well as to the Secretary, to make sure that items are being addressed in a timely fashion.

The research and monitoring plans, they're supposed to identify fisheries, fishery interactions, habitats, and other areas of research that are necessary for management purposes, and these research priorities shall be established for five years, updated as necessary, and submitted to the Secretary and regional Science Centers, as I just had mentioned. What we're trying to do right

now is take a broader approach, trying to get feedback from all of our APs and not just the Mackerel Cobia AP, but all of them, including the SSC, in order to have a broader list of items to include in our research and monitoring plan.

One of the reasons for this is, as we go into ecosystem-based fisheries management, that's going to be requiring much more information than what we had in the past, and some of it might be requiring surveys, which are challenging to do for federal and council staff, because of limitations on the questions that we're able to ask, and so it might be a good idea to use some of the academic partners that we have in the region to ask some of these questions of our stakeholders.

In Attachment 4, you're going to see a series of research recommendations that we've developed, or put together, for mackerel and cobia species in the region. The first two that we have listed up there really focus on the stock assessments for king and Spanish mackerel. For king mackerel, we have a stock assessment coming up in 2025, and many of these items that we have listed here -- I am not going to go through them all, and they're very assessment related, and they're not necessarily the best ones for some of the stakeholders to get engaged with, but I think one of the big ones is the item listed down there last, is the FISHstory, trying to get some of this length data from the 1950s to the 1970s.

We had talked with a stock assessment scientist, back after the last assessment completed, and he said this information would be very useful for king mackerel. It's a stock assessment that goes back to the 1900s, and that's why we had developed it as one of our items that we included in FISHstory, trying to get this length data.

The next assessment that we have up there is Spanish mackerel research priorities, and some of these come from the most recent stock assessment that was done for Spanish mackerel, and it's still being discussed by the SSC, and it was discussed just yesterday, and so we've included some of their comments in there, and we would look to additional comments that come of the AP members might have to include in this.

Once again, I'm not going to go through all of these, and these are fairly technical, but, if you want to go over to the next page, I know this is one of the items that has been mentioned already today, is talking about climate change, and we listed both king and Spanish mackerel for species to look into for changes in species distribution, changes in movements or reproductive patterns, and we think that's very important for the Spanish and king mackerel fishery. Now I'm going to transfer over to Christina, and she's much more in-tune with the social and economic priorities, and so, Christina, if you want to take those away.

MS. WIEGAND: Thanks, Chip. We just have a few social and economic priorities listed here, and, like Chip, I'm not going to go over every single one, but I did want to highlight just a couple. First, you know, providing updated estimates of recreational economic values for our council-managed species, and that's something that we've been missing for a number of years, and we could really use some additional information on, as well as developing some estimates, or models, to look at the response of angler behavior to regulation changes, which ultimately will help the council craft better regulations.

Then, as a social scientist, I like to dig into some of the more social, as opposed to economic, aspects of fisheries, and so one of the things that the council is really interested in is finding a way

to quantify current and baseline access to fishing infrastructure throughout the South Atlantic region.

We've heard, not just from this AP, but also from the Snapper Grouper AP and the Dolphin Wahoo AP, that access to working waterfronts is becoming increasingly challenging for fishermen in our area, and so understanding what access is currently like to fishing infrastructure ultimately can help the council better understand sort of community dependence and the cultural importance of fishing activities throughout the region, and so those were just the few that I wanted to highlight, and we can scroll back to the top, but what we're really looking for here is, and correct me I'm wrong, Chip, but feedback from the AP, if there's anything here that you think should be a top priority, or if there's anything that you feel is missing from these lists.

DR. COLLIER: Yes, that's exactly right, Christina, and I think it's also important to note that, if fishermen are seeing something different on the water than what they've seen in the past, it's good to let us know early. Quite often, it takes time to get some of these research ideas into research then completed and then written up, and so it is about a three or four-year cycle, and so, if you're seeing something now, and you want that to be addressed, I think it's a good opportunity to put it out there and see if anybody is willing to do some research on it.

MR. LAKS: Rusty, go ahead.

MR. HUDSON: I just wanted to shift the thought a little bit, to something I've heard through the decades, about the period during World War II, where all of our inlets were closed, and then, after a couple of years, they opened it up, nearshore daytime only, and Spanish mackerel was a big deal, and it fed a lot of people, and so you might want to try to kind of earmark that period, because it was a net and hook-and-line combination effort back then, but it only lasted for a couple of years, until World War II ended, and so it's just a thought, that there is a possible picture of the population of Spanish mackerel, if you can assemble the numbers, and I just wanted to throw that out there. Thank you.

MR. LAKS: Go ahead, Thomas.

MR. NEWMAN: The first bullet point under Spanish mackerel, with the observer coverage, I've said this so many times that I feel crazy saying it again, but all of our data from North Carolina, from the observer coverage, is in the Northeast Fisheries Center, Science Center, and there is a multitude of discard data, catch length data, and, I mean, it's huge, and no one has yet to tap into that to help manage Spanish mackerel. That has to start to be incorporated in these stock assessments and the general abundance of Spanish mackerel.

Also, you had mentioned SEAMAP, underneath the king mackerel, and the NEAMAP surveys, and I mentioned it at the last meeting, and it's in the meeting minutes, but the NEAMAP surveys had more young-of-the-year samples in the last three years than the SEAMAP study had, and so we have to start using these northern scientific studies to look and see what's there, and it would help a lot with the climate change stuff as well, because these fish are moving, and they're expanding.

The data is there, but people just have not looked for them. I mean, it's not even a thing of getting new data, and the data has been there, and I also think we definitely need some fishery-independent

surveys for these pelagic species, and I've been running that through my head, and just I would love to help out with that, any way I can, and I guess I need to get up with Sea Grant, or some other research organization, and I just don't know -- How many years of data would you need on something like that for it to be used for management?

I feel like you would need at least a few years, and we've got to get started on something like that as fast as we can, because these species are way too important not to have a whole lot broader range of, you know, surveys and sampling programs in place. I mean, some of the numbers in that Spanish mackerel stock assessment were just straight up pitiful. I mean, it was in the dozens of fish, for some years on some of these surveys, and that can't keep happening. We've got the infrastructure here, and we've just got to get the numbers ran through the scientists, through a biological survey, to validate what we're seeing.

MR. LAKS: Will, go ahead.

MR. JONES: Talking about observations of changes we've seen over the years, and, I mean, I'm a young guy, but I have noticed, in my lifetime, that we're catching Spanish mackerel around Cape Lookout earlier and earlier, and, you know, I don't know about from year to year, but definitely over time, and in colder water too, and not just like we're getting warmer water temperatures earlier, but I'm catching them in colder water than I used to. I mean, I caught some in March in fifty-eight-degree water, and it was weird, but every year does seem like -- Or every few years, it seems like we're catching them earlier and earlier, and that's just an observation that I've made, and other people have brought up to me as well, around our area.

MR. LAKS: Thank you. Go ahead, Bill.

MR. PALMER: I'm good with what's been said, and I think it was Steve that was talking about that we really need to get a handle on this quickly, and I totally agree with that. We don't need to be overestimating in a guess, and we need to have facts, so that we know that this is pretty much our stop number, that we can depend that our commercial boys are able to work with, and live with, but the recreational -- We've got to really get a handle on that, because we have no idea what's being caught out there right now on king, or on the Spanish, and that's it.

MR. LAKS: Steve, do you mind if I jump in for a second, and then I will let you go, and I would like to just piggyback on that, and also what Steve English had said earlier, when we were having the discussion about the port meetings.

The council is looking at doing a recreational reporting permit, for either an individual or a vessel, and they haven't determined what, but I think Christina, or Tom, can tell us that -- I think they're leaning on not including a permit for king and Spanish mackerel, and I think it would be important that we get this information, and we heard how valuable king and Spanish mackerel were, and I would be interested, and, after we go through the list, if you guys comment on that, and if you would like to make a motion to the council to suggest that we do include them in any kind of recreational permit that goes forward, and I have a question for you, Steve, before you go.

With the Spanish mackerel observer coverage, and they have cast nets down there, and that probably would be difficult, because not everyone is a federally-permitted boat, right, and so I

don't think the state has any observer process, and so, Steve, if you could speak on both of those and what you wanted to talk about, and I'm sorry to jump ahead of you.

MR. ENGLISH: That was my exact thought, Ira, was the observer coverage, and the only observer coverage we have is in the gillnet fishery, to my knowledge, and there is none in the cast net or handline or recreational, any of it, and I don't know of any observer coverage in those fisheries, and, just like you alluded to, anybody who -- Most of the guys who fish with cast nets and stuff, they're all state waters, and so they all eliminated their permits, because they didn't want to fool with having to fill out the paperwork and all that stuff, and so they don't even have that permit, the federal permits, and so it would almost have to come from the state, or work hand-in-hand with the state, to be able to get an observer program for the other portions of the fishery. Like I said, all the observer coverage is all for the gillnet fishery.

MR. LAKS: Rusty.

MR. HUDSON: The year-one and year-two class, of both Spanish and king, there has been an interaction at the midpoint of the east coast of North Carolina of those animals being almost unidentifiable at a certain point, as far as the catch rate, and I think that it's important to understand the interaction, the intermixing, of that size class in that first year or two, because, of course, that's when they evolve to being the breeding season, and so I just think that there's some issues here on how to measure both of those populations when there's interactions with the gillnet and other fisheries that depend on that up there in North Carolina. Thank you.

MR. LAKS: Chip.

DR. COLLIER: Thank you for all those comments, and I've written all those down, and I think we had overlooked a couple of those, and thank you so much for mentioning the NEAMAP surveys, and I think those would be a good addition to get included in there, as well as improved recreational numbers for both Spanish and king mackerel, and then Rusty's last comment of really trying to make sure that the fish are identified properly in some of these areas where there's overlap, and so we'll look into that.

Then, back to Thomas's question about how long it takes for an independent survey, a fishery-independent survey, to really get incorporated into the management process, it can vary, and some of the age data could be incorporated very early on, if it's an age-limited or a data-limited species. However, for Spanish mackerel, and king mackerel, there's a lot of data for that, but it could be used to inform maybe Rusty's question, where he was saying the overlap between age-one and two, and so it could be used to answer some of those questions like that.

The other area where it's going to be most informative is looking at trends in abundance, and, quite often, that takes over five years for that to be ready. You need to have at least three years, to be looking at really a trend, and so five years is where it's starting to look to make sure that people are comfortable with the data coming out of a survey, and, in all likelihood, it's going to take up to ten years for something like that to get truly incorporated into a stock assessment and really provide some long-term guidance on how the population is responding to ups and downs, and so thank you, all, for the comments. If you have any additional items that you think need to be incorporated, please don't hesitate to email Christina, or myself, and this was great to hear your comments. Thank you so much.

MR. LAKS: Thank you, Chip. Is there anyone else that wants to raise their hand? If not, we will move on, unless there's anything else, Christina.

MS. WIEGAND: No, and, like Chip said, I really appreciate you guys, you know, going through the mackerel components of that document and that providing your input, and I think we've got some really great additions to add now.

MR. LAKS: All right. Well, I guess next is space center operations. Steve, you had your hand raised?

MR. DONALSON: Yes. Sorry. I'm sure you already said this, Christina, but are we recording this session, by any chance?

MS. WIEGAND: Absolutely.

MR. DONALSON: Okay. Cool. I had some technical difficulties, and so I missed about twenty minutes, and I wanted to make sure that I can catch up. That's it, Ira. Sorry.

MS. WIEGAND: We record all of these meetings, and I am certainly happy to provide you a copy of this meeting, either in video form, or we'll also have someone type up a transcript of it as well, whichever you would prefer, Steve.

MR. DONALSON: Thank you.

MS. WIEGAND: All right, and so space center operation impacts. This is -- I don't have a formal presentation for this, but it is something that the council has asked for you guys to discuss, especially those of you who fish down in Florida, and so it's recently sort of come to the attention, I guess you could say to the council, that there's been a pretty big increase in space exploration activities off of Florida, in that there's sort of two main things that are often associated with that. There's some pretty large area closures during launches, as well as some marine debris that people have been noticing related to these space exploration efforts. The council was just hoping to get a little bit of feedback from you on how this sort of increase in space exploration has been impacting your fishing businesses, if at all, and so I will sort of turn it back to you, Ira, and anyone that fishes along the Florida coast that might be impacted by this.

MR. LAKS: Charlie and then Keith and then Tom Roller.

MR. LOCKE: I haven't fished down there in about six or seven years, but I used to go down there in the spring every year and hook-and-line king, and then we would gillnet Spanish out there on the shoals, and, just back then, we would get run out all the time by the helicopter, when there was a launch, and Steve English will know, and Tom Legere, and he was like one of the better gillnet fishermen down there, and he's actually looking at moving to North Carolina, because it's impacting him so much, and he's literally -- Between the Spanish being spread out, where the warm water is not bunching them up, and then all the launches, it's really -- It's killing him down there, from what he says, and I haven't fished there in --

Like I said, it's probably been eight years since I was back down there, but, you know, his description to me was like, you know, if you would chum up fish at the end of the dock, and then you were constantly lighting off firecrackers on top of it, or fireworks on top of it, they probably wouldn't be there very long, and so he actually felt like the fish weren't using the shoals like they used to as much, and so, you know, there's a lot of --

There's all these shoals that are outside the three-mile line, and that's where you catch your Spanish, because the water is shallow enough that your net can stay on the bottom, and it fishes more water column, and, in his mind, the fish are being run off of there. Now, I'm not down there to back that up, but I think it's a concern that the council probably needs to look at, whether it's impacting landings, or even just the fishermen in the area that maybe even need to look at being compensated for it, and I'm not sure where to go from that.

MR. LAKS: Keith, go ahead.

MR. BOWEN: I catch, you know, king mackerel, but there are some areas that are definitely affected for king fishing. I mean, you've got Chris that is right in the no-go zone, and then it's like they go to launch it, and then they stop, and they cancel it, and then it's the next day, and all along the fish are piled up in those areas, and so you're getting run out by, you know, Coast Guard helicopters, and sent fifteen miles, or ten miles, south, and I don't really know what kind of an answer that you could have, unless they just sent them off at nighttime, but I don't think that's something they would consider, just for some commercial fishermen, but it definitely does have an effect. I mean, you could be catching limits every day, and then, two or three days out of the week, and you've got nice weather, which hardly happens any more, and you might not be able to go, because there's a launch, and the whole entire area is covered, and so, anyway, that's just my observation on that.

MR. LAKS: Steve, go ahead.

MR. ENGLISH: I totally agree with Keith, and the problem is we're seeing more and more launches now, and they have reupped their launches, and they're getting a lot more launches now, and they had interaction with a cruise ship, and so they got real strict on a bunch of things too, and so they're getting more aggressive on running you out of the area, and the problem is that it costs you the whole day when they do it, and, you know, you get eighteen days of fishing, and they run you out nine of them, and, well, you've lost half your season, and so it's a pretty bad thing, and they really need to get a handle on something, or, like he said, they ought to be compensating the fishermen, if they've got to run them out, and that just should be part of the expense of the private launches and all, and that should be part of their expense.

MR. LAKS: Steve Donaldson.

MR. DONALSON: I will just throw it out there, just to have it in the minutes, or the notes, but would it ever make sense for them to try to coordinate, or to have, the SKA, at least, coordinate the dates around the launch times, the known launch times, because you're talking about potentially scrubbing an entire weekend of a tournament, where 400 to 800 boats have invested to be there, and it might be nice to put those groups together.

MR. LAKS: Tom.

MR. ROLLER: When I originally raised my hand, what I wanted to ask was that I was curious how these closures were impacting fishermen, and if we could hopefully get some feedback on how it was impacting people spatially, how it was adjusting their effort, and I just want to thank, particularly, Charlie and Steve, for their comments there, and I forgot who made comment between them, but it was an excellent, excellent comment, and I think that's really what the council is looking for.

Also, just for those who have been listening along to the council meetings, the marine debris term that's been used has been "space junk", and I was curious if there had been any interactions with space junk by any fishermen in that area, if anybody has heard of anything, other than the shrimp boats.

AP MEMBER: The mahi-mahi like them, when they're floating, the space junk.

MR. LAKS: Go ahead, Steve.

MR. ENGLISH: There is always -- There is just tons of debris out there on that bottom, and, yes, you will get a little more, but everybody -- The commercial guys, you know, you pretty much find where it's at, locate it, mark it, and then you work around it, and so the debris is not getting that much worse yet, but it's something that, you know, we're well aware of.

MR. LAKS: I know this is really out of the council's purview of what they can do with mission control, but I don't know if any of you want to suggest maybe making a motion that the council notifies space agencies that this is just not just an issue with shrimp nets, but it's costing, you know, the Spanish and king mackerel fleets hardship too, and that might be something we can do, and it doesn't even have to be a motion, but just a suggestion to look into it, or say that it is affecting not just the shrimp fishery, but it's also pretty seriously affecting not only commercial, but the potential for recreational fisheries to be affected, too.

MS. WIEGAND: I will certainly make sure that the conversation that was had today -- I'm not sure that we necessarily need a motion, and it seems like the AP is sort of pretty much in agreement over how this is impacting king and Spanish mackerel fishing businesses, both from a commercial standpoint and from a recreational standpoint, and so I will definitely make sure that all of that information is recorded and presented to the council, and, of course, both Tom and Spud are online listening to the comments that you all are providing.

MR. LAKS: Steve.

MR. ENGLISH: Christina said what needed to be said, and, yes, they definitely do need to acknowledge it, and they need to come up with something on it, and that would be great.

MR. LAKS: I wonder what would happen if one of those rockets hit a right whale.

MS. BROUWER: Ira, sorry to interrupt your meeting, and there is a couple of members of the public who have got their hands up, and I just wanted to let them know that there's going to be an opportunity, at the end of the meeting, to make public comment, and I think that would be the appropriate time for them to chime-in.

MS. WIEGAND: Thanks, Myra.

MR. LAKS: Do we have anything more for the space center operations? Christina, do you want to do the public comment now, especially if it seems to be concerned about the space center?

MS. WIEGAND: Yes, we can go ahead and do public comment now, and then jump into sort of our last agenda item, and that's perfectly fine.

MR. LAKS: Okay.

MS. WIEGAND: I will say, if you are a member of the public online, and you're interested in making public comment, go ahead and raise your hand, and we'll get you unmuted, so that you're able to speak.

MR. LAKS: Mr. Jim Busse, go ahead.

MR. BUSSE: Hi, Ira. How are you doing?

MR. LAKS: Hi, Jim.

MR. BUSSE: Christina, thank you, and Rusty, Charlie Locke, but, anyway, we're down here at ground-zero, right in the middle of the launches, and I want you to know that the federally-regulated fishery that you guys are trying to manage, and take care of, is being assaulted on a weekly basis now, and, if the launch program gets its way, they'll launch one or two a day, and so, if you've not seen a space operation's rocket launch advisory chart, before the launch, they put out an advisory, and they have areas that are marked off, latitude and longitude, and, whether you're recreational or commercial, you're not supposed to go in those zones.

Some of those zones is a \$250,000 fine, and no more than six years in jail, if you go in these zones, and so, whether you're a charter fisherman, or a tournament fisherman, or a commercial fisherman, you're screwed on all those days, and the space program is a lovely thing, and it's a wonderful thing, and it's growing in leaps and bounds here, but it's doing detrimental damage to a federally-managed fishery that you guys have control over, somewhat, and so you all need to get together with these people down here.

They are somewhat cooperative, and they listen to us, but then they go back about their business of creating more launches and more launches, and so, not only do they go out and pollute the Indian River, and the Banana River, and the Mosquito Lagoon, but they also go up and they dump a bunch of space junk on the Oculina Bank, doing massive harm to that, but everyone is so involved, and so tuned-in, on the spectacular launches, and the future of the space program, that, as the commercial and recreational sport fishing community, are being -- How do we call it? Let's say disregarded, and how's that for a fancy word?

Anyway, you all need to do something, and you all need to get involved. These are your fish, and we're being left out, and we have a resource to harvest, and we're not being able to do it, because of the space program, and you would be having the same conversation if you were up in New Jersey right now, with all these windmills being erected, and so we're being pushed out, and we're

just another head on the chopping block, and so I think you guys should pay strict attention to your local Spanish and king mackerel and other fisheries in our area, including shrimp, and pay attention and do something about it.

MR. LAKS: Thank you, Jim.

MR. BUSSE: You're welcome, Ira.

MR. LAKS: We'll go to Rusty and then Laurilee.

MR. HUDSON: Yay, Jim, and hopefully yay, Laurilee. Thank you so much for speaking. Amen.

MR. LAKS: Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: Was that it, Rusty? Okay. There's another aspect that we need to look at, or, well, two more. I mean, Jim mentioned the space junk falling in the Oculina reef, but the shrimpers are also catching it in their nets, and it's destroying their nets, and they're losing their catch, and Mike Merrifield will touch on that.

I'm going to talk about their impacts to the estuary itself. You have the Indian River Lagoon, and it is in deep trouble right now, as far as the water quality, and our seagrass is all gone, and we all know, and appreciate, the value of estuaries to the offshore fisheries, both commercial and recreational, and so what we're looking at is massive development, probably more development going on out there now than what happened in the 1960s, but the beginning of the end for the northern Indian River Lagoon happened in the 1960s, when the space center -- You know, they bought the land, and they ran the people that lived there off of Merritt Island, and they built the causeway, and they built a causeway across the Banana Creek, and so the northern Banana River Estuary and the Indian River Estuary used to be connected by Banana Creek.

There was -- You know, there was movement of water between the two estuaries, and there was -- You know, there was oysters, and there were so many oysters along the shoreline, in those little creeks and tributaries, that you couldn't pull a boat up to the shoreline. All the homeowners, they had docks to get out into the water, because you literally couldn't get across the oyster beds, and all of that is gone now. The great schools of mullet, all of the things that we used to have, it's all gone, and, over time -- One of the worst things that they did is they built these dikes around the saltmarsh, and over 95 percent of the natural saltmarshes of the Indian River Lagoon were diked in the 1960s, to cut them off from the saltwater and turn them into freshwater lakes, so that they could use them for mosquito control.

Well, they put culverts underneath the dikes, and so they reconnected the impoundments back to the Indian River Lagoon, and, over time, those freshwater lakes transitioned back into healthy saltmarsh, and so these impounds that were created in the 1960s are now major nurseries for fish species, as well as seagrass, and they're full of ruppia seagrass, and the seeds flow out into the lagoon through the culverts.

The developers that are -- The contractors that are developing out at the space center, they're applying for permits from DEP to discharge stormwater and treated industrial wastewater into the impoundments of the Merritt Island Wildlife Refuge, which will ultimately affect the Indian River

Lagoon, and we're talking about millions, or possibly billions, of gallons of new freshwater every year going into these very important nursery areas inside the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge.

If we're ever going to get clams to come back, our filter feeders to come back, and our seagrass to come back, and we've already got so much freshwater coming into the lagoon from the west side, from all the new houses that are being built, because of the development at the space center, and so, between all of this new development, and all of this new freshwater going into these closed systems -- The northern Indian River Lagoon has a year-and-a-half residency time, and the northern Banana River has a two-and-a-half-year residency time, and so, if they start putting all this new fresh water into these basically closed estuaries, it's going to be catastrophic towards recovering our seagrass and recovering our fisheries. Thank you.

MR. LAKS: Thank you, Laurilee. I am going to go to Mike, and then we'll go back to the panel, but we'll let Mike go.

MS. WIEGAND: Mike, it shows that you're unmuted, but we can't hear you. Ira, what I suggest is that we sort of go back to Thomas and Rusty, and then we can circle back to Mike. We can try to troubleshoot with him, so that we can hear him.

MR. LAKS: That sounds good. Thomas and then Rusty.

MR. NEWMAN: I have been listening to this conversation at the council for some time now, and I've dealt with some of this stuff up off of Chincoteague, where they also launch a few rockets, and you really can't get a picture of how much effect this is having unless you see some of these closure maps, and we look at it in more detail, to see how many days a week they're doing it right now, and then how many days a week -- I know they're proposing to have launches every day, but I would like to see a more formal -- Something more formal put together, so we can actually see how much impact this is having, because everybody that doesn't fish in those areas can't really fathom what's going on, and that's also the first time that I've heard too about the rockets going over the top of the shoals and possibly scaring the fish off of those areas, and somebody needs to jump on that and start monitoring these areas and seeing if they do leave that shoal for, you know, forty-eight hours or something after each rocket launch, but I would like to continue discussion on this, and get a little bit more detailed presentation, with maybe some of these closure maps that NASA puts out.

MR. LAKS: Rusty.

MR. HUDSON: This is some old history, but, back at the cape, that inlet wasn't even created until the early 1950s, and then, with Ponce Inlet, with regard to the natural Mosquito Inlet, as it was called historically, it would up becoming shape-shifting. Starting in the early 1960s, and into the 1970s, and then it really affected things, to the point where you can read this one document from about 1900 or so, but it seemed that the oysters were the second-best bed of oysters on the entire U.S. east coast, out of Ponce Inlet, and it's now dead, and so it begs to wonder how do you want to manage what naturally existed. Thank you.

MR. LAKS: Did we get Mike figured out? I would add to this, real quick, also, that I don't know what their weather calculations are of when they scrub a launch, but I don't think they do it on

forty-knot days, and so it's affecting calm days, and that kind of doubles the insult. Mike. Christina, do we want to move on and see if we can get Mike to jump back in later?

MS. WIEGAND: Sure. Let's move on down the agenda, and we've just got one last item, and I will say, Mike, if we can't get you unmuted, and be able to hear you, you can always type your comments into that little chat box, and we can read it out, or, of course, there's an online form associated with this meeting, where you can provide public comment, but, after we sort of run through our very last agenda item, we'll swing back by and see if we can get you.

MR. LAKS: Okay, and so we're going to move into the election of a vice chair. Is there anyone that would like to make a nomination?

MR. DONALSON: Who were the past vice chairs?

MR. LAKS: I think our last vice chair was Steve Swann, wasn't it, Christina?

MS. WIEGAND: So it was Steve Swann for a while, and your most recent vice chair, and the reason we need to elect a new vice chair, is because Tom Roller was the most recent vice chair of the Mackerel Cobia AP, and so, now that he is serving as a council member, we do need a new vice chair.

MR. DONALSON: **Can I nominate myself?**

MS. WIEGAND: You can certainly volunteer and see if anyone wants to make a motion to that effect.

MR. LAKS: Is there a second for Steve Donalson?

MR. JONES: I will second that.

MR. LAKS: Okay. **All those in favor, raise your hand.**

MS. WIEGAND: I will give it a second for people to get their hands up.

MR. ENGLISH: I can't raise my hand, Ira, and I wanted to nominate somebody.

MR. LAKS: Did you hear Steve English, Christina?

MS. WIEGAND: I did, and so we've got, you know, the motion that Steve Donalson made, and Will seconded on the board.

MR. LAKS: We vote on this first, right?

MS. WIEGAND: We have to vote on this first, or someone can propose a substitute motion.

AP MEMBER: I will propose a substitute motion, if that's what means to -- If somebody wanted to nominate somebody and didn't get a chance to, and so, if that's the right thing to do, I will make that motion.

MS. WIEGAND: Your other option could be to -- I am trying to think of the easiest way to do this now.

MR. LAKS: Withdraw the motion?

MS. WIEGAND: Steve Donalson was the maker of the motion. Well, it's been seconded, and so it belongs -- I am trying to remember my Roberts Rules off the top of my head. It's been seconded now, and so it belongs to the committee, and so it can't be withdrawn. Myra, if I'm wrong about this, please correct me, and so we would have to vote on it, or somebody can propose a substitute motion, and so I would say, Steve English, if you were interested in nominating someone, and didn't get to, you do have the option to propose a substitute motion here, before we vote on this motion.

MR. ENGLISH: Okay. I can clear this up real easy. I am perfectly content with Steve Donalson, and I was going to nominate Thomas Newman, and I see that he voted for Steve Donalson, and so I'm happy.

MS. WIEGAND: As long as everyone is happy.

MR. LAKS: I think that's seven in favor. Any opposed.

MS. WIEGAND: I would say the easiest way to do this is, if you're opposed, maybe just unmute and note that you're opposed.

MR. LAKS: **I don't hear anyone opposed. Any abstentions?** Congratulations.

MR. DONALSON: Thank you, thank you. Ira, can we circle back later and talk about this, offline?

MR. LAKS: Sure.

MS. WIEGAND: Before we go to Other Business, Ira, did you want to try to go back to Mike and see if we can get him unmuted for his public comment?

MR. LAKS: Yes, and I see that Laurilee has -- She might have talked to him, and so we can try Mike first, and then maybe let Laurilee -- Maybe she's going to convey what he had to say.

MR. MERRIFIELD: Can you hear me now?

MR. LAKS: Got you.

MR. MERRIFIELD: Perfect. Sorry about that. Basically, I just wanted to talk about the closed areas, the RNAs, they call them, and they're based on the trajectories, and so they change, but they typically go a good ways out, but they don't go in either a straight easterly, northeasterly, or southerly type direction, and so, basically, you have to be tuned into these things all the time, because they change all the time, and they don't always -- When a launch scrubs, they don't always let you know right away, and the launch windows can be anywhere from a hour to a couple hours

long, two to three hours long, and so there's a pretty good-sized impact on anybody that's either gone out fishing and can't get back, and we've had that happen before, where fishermen can't get back into port, because they're stuck on the other side of the closed area.

I mean, there are some safety issues there as well, and so, you know communication of these closed areas is key, and then you've got the impact of unfishable areas, or you're stuck way offshore, and you can't continue fishing, and so it's a lot of impact to the fishermen.

The other thing that we talked about was debris, and there is some debris that's left over from old launches, and there's new launch debris, and the stuff kind of rolls around on the bottom, and so it doesn't always stay in the same place, and, with some of the new programs that are coming online, out of the space center, they're not going to be recovering, or bringing back, some of the boosters and things like that, and so there's just going to be some -- There's going to be more debris out there, and so it's just something that --

Also, they've talked about, when they're bringing some of these things back in, there might be some unspent fuel, some hydrazine, some toxic oils, things like that, and I just really think, from a fisheries standpoint, there needs to be some quantification of what it is, how much is being put out there, and what are the levels of toxic materials that are being released out there on each launch, so we can just get a handle on -- You know, as a single launch, most of the Environmental Protection Agency reviews have said that the effect is negligible, but, when you start piling these things on here, is it really negligible, or are we going to start seeing some impacts from some of these toxic chemicals, or debris that is being pushed out there, and that's about all I had really to add to that conversation.

MR. LAKS: Thank you, Mike. We have time to let Laurilee chime back in, don't we?

MS. WIEGAND: Absolutely.

MR. LAKS: Go ahead, Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: Okay, and I really appreciate you guys bringing this up to the different committees, because it's really important, and I really appreciate it, and I actually had my hand up in case Mike couldn't get back on, but I just wanted to take this opportunity to thank you, to thank NOAA and National Marine Fisheries Service, you know, for getting involved and at least asking questions.

There is going to be a presentation by Dale Ketcham, and he is the Government Affairs Coordinator for Space Florida, and he will be making a presentation at the June council meeting, and so you guys tune-in, so you can listen to it, so you can hear Space Florida's side of it. We would like to see some kind of provision that would exempt, you know, people that want to sign into a program where they would be exempted, you know, from suing the government if they're out fishing, or coming across that area, and a piece of rocket falls on them. They are going to probably be dead anyway, but their family might sue.

Anyway, we're hoping for some kind of relief like that, where we can opt-out of the ability to sue the federal government if a rocket part does fall on a fishing boat, so that we can continue to fish and traverse those areas. The chance of a rocket part falling on a fishing boat are much smaller

than a rocket part falling on a cruise ship, and we don't have 6,000 passengers on our fishing boats, and so maybe there's a possibility that they could consider that, and I think that's what we need to push for.

As far as the garbage that's on the bottom out here, we didn't put that there, and they did, and I think that, if they can initiate a program where they could, you know, maybe pay a shrimper for bringing that garbage back to the shore, rather than throwing it back in the water, that might give them incentive, and it would certainly be cheaper for the federal government to have a reward for the shrimpers that bring in the space junk, and it would be a lot cheaper than having to send a salvage company out to try to locate the stuff and get it off the bottom, but I do have a concern about, if it's falling in the rock shrimp grounds, and the rock shrimpers are catching it, then it's falling into the *Oculina* reef, too. Thank you, and thanks again for you all's support. I really appreciate it.

MR. LAKS: Thank you, Laurilee. All right. Rusty, you had your hand raised? I'm sorry.

MR. HUDSON: Thank you. I have to agree with both Mike and Laurilee, and they are bringing up actually awesome concerns that needs to be addressed, and it's not in the realm of being addressed right now, except on this level, and so thank you.

MR. LAKS: All right. Well, I guess we're heading into Other Business. Is there anyone that has any other business to be brought forward? Tony B., go ahead.

MR. BENEVENTO: You mentioned, at the outset, that the kingfish tournaments would no longer be able to sell their kingfish, and what is that all about, and is there -- It doesn't seem -- You know, that's such a small little thing.

MS. WIEGAND: I'm sorry. Let me go ahead and clarify, Tony, and that's certainly not the case. Right now, it's written into the regulations that properly-permitted king and Spanish mackerel tournaments -- Those fish can be donated to a dealer, who then sells that fish and donates that money to charity. There is no discussion currently going on at the council table to change that. However, the council has simply asked for the Science Center to work with the states to provide more information on how those landings are tracked and sort of an estimate of those landings over the last ten years, but there currently hasn't been any discussion about removing that provision.

MR. LAKS: If I'm correct, we'll probably talk about that more in the future, Christina?

MS. WIEGAND: Absolutely. Once the council has gotten information from the Science Center, I imagine they will want this advisory panel to talk about it as well, and we're just sort of waiting to get additional information, so that, you know, we have that in front of us when having these discussions.

MR. LAKS: Anyone else? If I could take just a few minutes, and I know I've talked to you about it, Christina, and I just want to bring it to your attention, guys, that the Marine Resource Education Program -- It's a great thing, if you're fisherman, to learn about some of these processes. If you're an advisory panel member, it will clarify a lot of these things, and make some things a lot clearer to you, and this is program that I've been a part of, and I just find it to be a really great program, and I would encourage you to look at this, and, if you're interested in attending, to please give a

call, or Dylan a call, and, this year, we're having an unusual workshop, where we're doing it all in one week, and we usually break it up in two weeks, and we're trying to accommodate fishermen, in the Southeast particularly, with this timeframe, where it's not the busiest time of year.

All your expenses would be covered, except for alcohol, but all your food and drink and travel expenses are covered, and it's a great program to let you find out about the science, and how the science relates to the management, and you get to meet some of these people who are involved in all of it, and it really helped me clarify a lot of things, and so I encourage you to look into it, and, if you're interested, to let me know. With that said, does anyone have anything else? Thomas.

MR. NEWMAN: I would just back up, Ira, on the MREP stuff, and I just got done attending the February meeting, and it's very helpful. You get to meet a lot of the key players in the science part of it, and the management part of it, and there's no pressure, and it's not like these meetings where you've got to vote on something, or you've got something contentious going on, and it's a lot more relaxed atmosphere, and you can have more intimate conversations, versus just having to raise your hand and getting answers and emailing back and forth, and it's a good, relaxed environment. You also get involved and see what the people on like the Gulf Council are kind of experiencing, and it's all around, and it's a good -- It's tiring, and it's ten or twelve hours a day, but it's a good feeling when you get done.

Also, for new business, we keep discussing MRIP, and the MRIP numbers, and I just got an email from them a few days ago, and I have listened to a couple of the webinars on MRIP a few months ago, but I know they're doing cumulative estimates now, instead of doing wave estimates, and they also are looking at get rid of PSEs above 50, and I was wondering maybe if, in the future, we could get a presentation from some of the MRIP folks.

My email, I think, came from Katherine Papacostas, and I think she's presented stuff at the MREP program, and she also presented stuff at the Mid-Atlantic Council, earlier this month, and that might be useful for some of our members, to have her, or somebody else from the MRIP staff, and this is the Marine Resource Information Program, to come and talk and maybe answer some questions for everybody.

MR. LAKS: Thank you, Thomas. Rusty.

MR. HUDSON: The MRIP and MREP, and I agree. It's definitely a useful situation, and it's the type of thing that people should be involved in from all sectors, and so I just wanted to throw that out there. Thank you.

MR. LAKS: Again, if anyone has any questions, I encourage you to give me a call. Is there any other business?

MS. WIEGAND: I don't see any hands up, Ira, but I did just want to take a quick moment to thank you all for attending a webinar meeting, and taking time out of your day to discuss these issues. I know that it's a big ask for you to spend a chunk of time doing this, but it is incredibly valuable information for the council to have, and I don't usually speak for the council, but I'm pretty sure that I speak for them in saying that we really appreciate you guys taking the time, and I just wanted to say that I'm looking forward to seeing you all in-person later this summer, and you'll be hearing from me in the next few days about dates for that meeting.

MR. LAKS: Again, thank you, all. Thank you very much, and I guess that concludes the Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel. Thank you again.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on April 21, 2023.)

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Transcribed By
Amanda Thomas
June 15, 2023

Attendee Report: April 2023 Mackerel Cobia AP Meeting

Report Generated:

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Webinar ID	Actual Start Date/Time	Duration	# Registered
720-716-003	04/21/2023 12:32 PM EDT	3 hours 24 minutes	45

Attendee Details

Attended	Interest Rating	Last Name	First Name
Yes	97	Batsavage	Chris
Yes	99	Benevento	Tony
Yes	40	Bianchi	Alan
Yes	99	Bowen	Keith
Yes	100	Brouwer	Myra
Yes	98	Busse	James
Yes	100	Byrd	01Julia
Yes	43	CARMICHAEL	JOHN
Yes	91	Curtis	Judd
Yes	48	DeVictor	Rick
Yes	93	English	Stephen
Yes	94	Franke	Emilie
Yes	54	Habich	William
Yes	81	Hadley	John
Yes	39	Helies	Frank
Yes	99	Hudson	Rusty
Yes	92	Jones	William
Yes	99	Kelly	Aaron
Yes	99	Laks	Ira
Yes	40	Mehta	Nikhil
Yes	95	Merrifield	Mike
Yes	94	Murphey	00Trish
Yes	99	Newman	Thomas
Yes	93	Oliver	Ashley
Yes	95	Olsen	Butch
Yes	98	Palmer	William
Yes	55	Roller	00Tom
Yes	47	Sanders	Steve
Yes	92	Schmidtke	Michael
Yes	45	Sweeney Tookes	Jennifer
Yes	91	Thompson	00Laurilee
Yes	46	Withers	Meg
Yes	77	Woodward	00 Spud

Yes	56
Yes	99
Yes	100
No	0
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collier	chip
donalson	Stephen
locke	charles
Bell	00 Mel
Cox	Jack
Cox	Derek
Iverson	Kim
Mallette	Johnathan
Patten	Willow
Poholek	Ariel
Smillie	Nick
Walker	Bill